

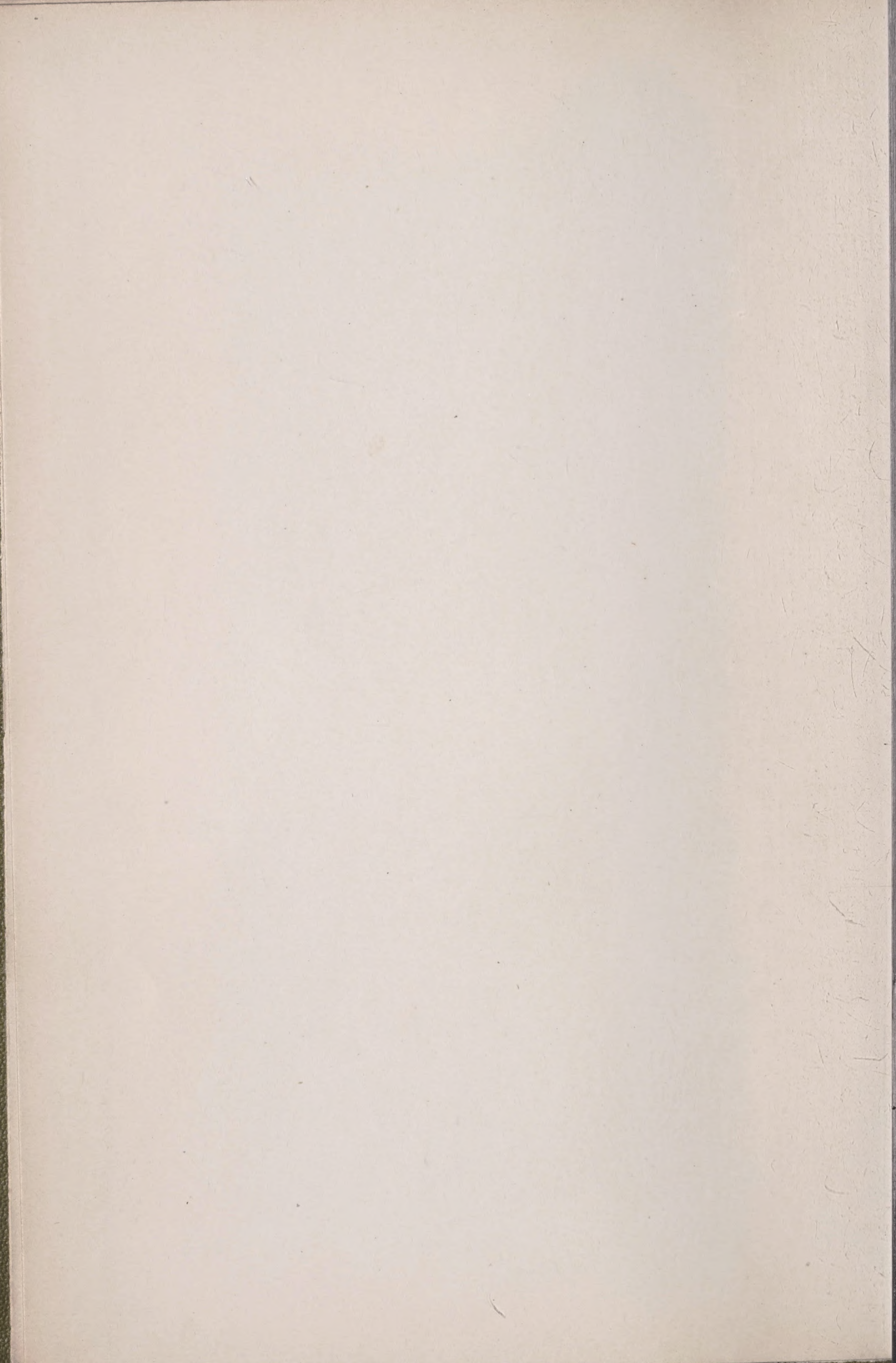
THE CLAYMORE ESTATE

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MOUNT TACOMA, FROM THE BLUFFS.

THE
CLAYMORE ESTATE:

A SEQUEL

TO

"THE OREGON QUARTETTE."

BY

MRS. MAY ANDERSON HAWKINS,

*Author of "Jack Payton and His Friends," "Philip Barton's Secret,"
"Stony Cardington's Ideal," "Character Chiselling,"
and Other Stories.*



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THE CLAYMORE ESTATE.

CHAPTER I.

IN A NET.

SOME years previous to the opening of our story, a delicately featured woman, proud in face and bearing, sat before a cheery fire in a tastefully-furnished room in one of the upper streets of Kansas City.

Her face was pale, and a settled gloom marked her demeanor.

A beautiful boy of some three years was playing upon the carpet by her chair.

"What will baby do if mamma has to go away and leave him?" she inquired, fondly placing her hand on the child's curling locks.

"Me go 'long wiv oo," he replied, not pausing in his play.

The lady sighed and whispered: "I wish he might. Then I would be certain of his future. As it is"—and again she sighed.

At this moment a handsome man, who bore the unmistakable marks of dissipation about him, entered the room.

The woman looked anxiously into his face as she asked: "Is he coming?"

"I could not find him. I will try again to-morrow. Why are you so crazy over the matter?"

"You know my reason," she coldly answered, gazing into his eyes, from which a very demon seemed to glance as he responded: "A woman's reason is always changing. Yesterday it was because you doubted my honor; the day before because you felt ill; to-day it may be a new reason sways you."

"Underneath them all is the unalterable one—that you have never loved me, and that you hate my child."

"You mistake," he said, while an unpleasant smile curled his lips. "I did love you once, until you proved false and gave your hand to my rival."

She turned upon him passionately.

"Why did you seek me again after he was dead? Were you wholly base that you won me only that you might torture me?"

"My rival hated me. He would rather have seen you dead than that you should ever have

become my wife. Is it nothing to me to know that I control his wife and child, and that both are absolutely in my power?" The answer seemed almost like the hiss of a serpent, and a look of cruel triumph played over his features.

The woman covered her face with her hands, and a sob shook her frame.

The boy beside her looked up from his play, and then stood upon his feet. He tried to draw her hands from her eyes, and said again and again: "Me loves oo, mamma. Baby loves oo. Won't oo take baby?"

"No. Go into the other room. Your mother is not strong enough to hold such a lubberly fellow as you," the man sternly said, taking the boy by the hand and leading him to the door. The child's lips quivered, but he made no remonstrance. He had evidently learned that it was best to obey when his step-father thus spoke to him.

"How can you hate the child as you do, Roland?" the mother asked, as the door closed behind the little fellow. "He is sweet-tempered and beautiful. A fiend might love such a child as he."

"Thank you for the implied compliment. He is the image of his father. I suppose you are not blind to that fact. You may have thought

him beautiful. I did not. Tastes differ, you see."

All at once the woman's bearing changed. She turned pleadingly toward the man, and exclaimed: "Surely you are not so cruel as you seem. Oh! if only you would love me a little, Roland, it would not be so hard to bear this pain and sickness. And if I could only trust you to care for the child after I am gone! Is your heart made of stone, that my agony does not move you?"

"And pray, what reason is there why you should not trust the boy to me? I am his natural guardian. He has no relatives whom you know. Why not leave him and the money to me, and atone, so far as you can, for the wrong you did me in the past. It was your fickleness that turned me into the cynical man I am."

The woman gazed long and fixedly into his face. Then she murmured: "I dare not. I dare not. I will leave you enough to keep you comfortably if you are careful. But I must do my duty by my boy. My old pastor will, through love for me, be kind to him, and you will be free to go where you please. Bring the lawyer to me in the morning, will you not? If he is out, wait in the office until he returns. I must not wait. My attacks grow worse day

by day. Promise me, Roland, that you will bring him to me on the morrow."

A mocking light played over the man's face as he replied, "Certainly I will promise. I will do my best. If he is out of the city, how can I bring him?"

That night as the clocks of the city were striking the hour of midnight, this woman's soul returned to its Maker.

One of her sudden attacks of pain held her in its grip for over an hour, and then, with the faintly uttered words, "Roland, be good to my boy!" and with the added ones, "Jesus, forgive and save me! My trust is in thee," she was gone.

These people were strangers in the city. After the woman was quietly laid to rest in the cemetery, no one cared what became of the man and the boy.

They dropped out of sight as a pebble drops out of sight in the ocean, and for a time there was no one to ask, "Where are they?"

CHAPTER II.

PERPLEXING QUESTIONS.

LAWYER Henderson sat in his office, ostensibly studying some documents which lay spread on the table before him.

The city of Tacoma, as is well known, is the center of a wide-awake and stirring population. It is finely situated on the lower part of Puget Sound, and some of the views from the more elevated streets are very beautiful.

Mr. Henderson was a busy man. He was considered one of the ablest lawyers in the State. As Washington, by her own modest estimate, has long felt herself fully abreast of her older sisters in all matters of vital importance, it follows that lawyer Henderson's abilities were of no ordinary kind.

At the present moment his mind seemed to be more intent on the study of his young partner, Stuart Holcombe, than in mastering the contents of the papers over which he bent.

The young man who sat at the desk in the farther corner of the wide, pleasant apartment,

was worth studying. His age was anywhere from twenty-four to thirty. When seen in one of his jolly moods, one would declare that he had but recently passed his majority. But when, as at the present moment, his broad brow was wrinkled into lines of care and anxiety, and his alert eyes were shadowed with the perplexity of many unsolved problems, one might have been pardoned for thinking that he would never again see thirty.

As room in the far west has not so much value as it bears with us in the east, things are there planned on so large a scale as causes a visitor from beyond the Alleghanies to stare in surprise and wonder.

Lawyer Henderson's office, therefore, in its breezy space and generous appointments, looked to be more of a reception room than an office.

This fact made the distance between the two occupants seem almost unfriendly, and Mr. Henderson suddenly appeared to notice that this was the case.

He arose, with a stifled yawn, and took a seat close to his partner's chair. The young man was so absorbed over his papers that he did not seem to notice the change until the elder man said, "Stuart, this will never do."

With a start young Holcombe looked up, and

asked, with a rueful smile, "What won't do? That I am failing to find out what I want?"

"That is bad, but not quite so serious as the fact that you are allowing this case to absorb too much of the man. Your sister complained to me this morning that you were eating almost nothing, and that you toss and groan half the night, and keep her from getting her 'beauty sleep!' You must mend your ways, for Helen is far too popular to lose her roses because you cannot find the missing heir to a run-down estate."

Mr. Henderson's tone was light, but his glance was keen as it rested upon his companion's countenance.

Stuart laughed.

"Helen is easily alarmed. She has been that way ever since I was ill last summer. I am all right, except a bit worried. Who wouldn't be when such an inheritance as Claymore is waiting for an owner?"

"Have you forgotten, Stuart, that, in lieu of a nearer claimant, you and your sister will step into that inheritance?"

"Not at all. This only makes me the more eager to find the rightful heir. The fact that the case has been placed with us puts me upon my honor as nothing else could have done. As

you decline to do more than advise in the matter, I must needs work alone until the knot is unravelled."

A little petulance crept into the young man's tone at the last words. Noticing this, his companion laid a hand on his arm and said: "But really, Stuart, I have decided to call a halt. You are getting nervous. Soon you will be cross. I never could endure having an irritable fellow about me. Gordon and Fielding, with my Oscar, are bent on having a hunting trip next week. I am going to pack you off with them. They will need a cool head to keep them in check, and you need just the change and bracing the jaunt will give you."

For a moment the young man's eyes sparkled with pleasure. Then he said, as he laid his hand on the papers which were strewn over his desk, "But what of these? Who will be tracing up the clue while I am gone?"

"Well, much as I dislike getting tangled up in the case, and busy as I am with other matters, I will promise to go over the ground carefully, and give you my opinion when you get back," was the older's man's reply, given in a deliberate and thoughtful tone.

Stuart sprang to his feet, the boy within him looking joyfully out of his eyes, and ringing in

his voice as he exclaimed: "Then you can book me for the trip. I would go, if for no other reason than to get you interested in this case. Heigh-ho! How I shall enjoy tramping it over the hills once more. When do the fellows—who are they? Gordon and Oscar—and—who is the third? When do they start?"

"Fielding is the other. They go on Tuesday. They have all their preparations made, even to a cook engaged and supplies laid in."

"Who is to officiate in the kitchen?" Stuart merrily inquired. "I would not care if we were to do our own cooking. I feel as if it would forever dissipate these wrinkles just to toss flap-jacks again, or roast a wild turkey, or a good fat goose, over a hot fire. Ugh! It makes me hungry even to think of the fish sizzling over the coals," and he laughingly passed his hand over his brow.

As one glanced into his countenance at this moment, he seemed a very boy, stalwart and muscular, but with the careless abandon of adolescent youth in his face and bearing.

"Clam Jones, son of that worthless sot whom I kept out of the penitentiary last fall, claims to understand the secrets of the pot and the oven. So the boys have decided to carry him along. He seems a fine fellow, in spite of his base parentage," was the lawyer's reply.

"I know him. I rode out to their wretched shanty for you when you had their case in hand. I met the boy. I wondered then how such a worthless fellow as Nat Jones could have such a promising son as he seemed. I am glad he is going on the jaunt. If he can manage the pots and pans as well as he answered the questions I put to him, there will be no discount on his cooking."

While he spoke the young man was gathering together his papers.

"I have not got the ghost of a clue yet," he added, his mind evidently returning to legal questions while he laid the documents in the desk. "If you can give me a starting point I believe I can follow it up."

"If you will dismiss the case altogether from your mind while out on the hunting trip, I promise I will do my best for you," the elder man replied.

"It's a bargain, then," was Stuart's smiling response.

CHAPTER III.

FROM GAY TO INTENSE.

“SARAH, Mr. Jackson dines with us to-day. Can you manage to have some of the clear soup he says no one knows how to prepare quite so well as do you?”

The speaker was Helen Holcombe. The woman addressed, who was about thirty years of age, seemed either a relative or a close friend. In fact, she was both, being a distant cousin of Helen's mother. Her position in the family was that of a trusted friend, experienced house-keeper, and skillful cook.

The brother and sister were orphans. Stuart, who had been at the head of the home since the death of his father, which sad event had occurred some three years previous to the opening of our story, urged in vain that another cook should be employed to lessen Sarah Grant's labors. She indignantly refused this offer, alleging that she must reign supreme or abdicate altogether.

“It may take three or four people down in Oregon to do the work in a house like this, but we

Washington women are different," was her scornful dismissal of the subject.

As the Holcombes had removed from southern Oregon to Tacoma only a year previous to Mr. Holcombe's death, the brother and sister meekly bore this thrust, and thereafter yielded their domestic affairs wholly into Sarah's hands. So, with only a young girl to assist, this efficient and tenderly-loved cousin so manipulated the household machinery that everything about the elegant home ran with the dainty order and harmony of clock-work.

She now darted a keen glance into Helen's face as she said: "Of course Mr. Jackson can have his soup. I had decided on making some to-day, anyhow."

Then she added, just above her breath, as the young lady passed into an adjoining room: "I wonder if it's the soup that brings him here so often? He is a nice gentleman, but if he is after anything more than that, it is my opinion he might as well stay away. Sarah Grant could tell him this much, even though she is not a prophet, nor the daughter of a prophet."

Then she heaved a sigh and pensively gazed at the door which had just closed behind Helen's straight, lithe figure.

"I wonder why she can't fancy him. He has

been after her for—well, nearly four years, to my certain knowledge. And that Dr. Traver, who was here about two years ago, said he was down in Oregon just before they moved to Washington.”

She turned briskly to her work, but after a moment again paused and glanced keenly toward the closed door.

“I believe that is just the way of it,” she muttered, while a frown darkened her brow. “Dr. Traver was as handsome as a picture, and I never saw her so happy as while he was here. I noticed she grew pale and puny after he went away—so suddenly—and I don’t doubt they had a quarrel. I wonder I never saw it in this light before.”

Whatever it was that she now saw, it seemed to disturb her very much. Her usually placid face wore a troubled expression during the entire day, and when the six o’clock dinner was served in the faultless style which always marked Sarah’s meals, her countenance had not regained its wonted calm.

Stuart sent a note saying that he was unavoidably detained at the office, and would dine at a restaurant later in the evening. So Helen was left to entertain the guest alone.

This fact seemed to afford Sarah Grant much

pleasure. Her brow cleared, and a smile hovered about her lips. She gave the lad who brought the note a generous slice of pound-cake, and as he went smiling down the back steps, she murmured: "The dear Lord's hand is in this. I am sure of that. Now Mr. Jackson can have a clear field for one evening, and Helen looks really pleased to see him. And she ought to be, for there is not a nicer gentleman in all Washington than Rodney Jackson."

Sarah never presumed on the fact of her relationship to address either Helen or her brother, when in the presence of strangers, except in the most formal manner. While she loved them both passionately, she was careful to maintain a humility of manner toward them which greatly amused Stuart. He knew her sturdy pride in them, and also her pride in the fact that she was unquestionably related to them by blood. Her careful avoidance of this claim, however, while she wielded the most despotic sway over all household matters, seeming to regard Helen as a mere child, afforded a study of the idiosyncracies of human nature which was very interesting.

"Mr. Jackson looks better to-night than I ever saw him," was her thought as, the last course having been served, she beckoned the maid who

waited on the table from the room and left the young people alone.

A glance at that moment into Rodney Jackson's face discovered two facts. The first was, that he was undoubtedly enjoying himself. The second, that he was a man who knew how to make the most of his opportunities.

His fine, alert face grew positively handsome as he glanced across the table into Helen Holcombe's laughing eyes and said: "It's a fact. Hallock is farther gone than any fellow I know. Miss Ashton is a nice enough girl, but Hal thinks her an angel. I asked him yesterday why the rest of us had not been able to discover her wings. He fairly glared at me."

"I am not surprised. I presume he thought you were making light of her charms. Edith is really a very lovely girl," was Helen's smiling reply. Her eyes grew thoughtful as she added: "I hope he really is in love with her. A true love affair with a girl like Edith Ashton might turn him altogether from his wild ways. Poor Mrs. Miller has had seasons of being almost heart-broken over him."

"Yes. Some mothers have a hard time with their boys." Mr. Jackson's manner was absent, and he seemed scarcely to know what he was saying.

"Strange, isn't it," he added a moment later, looking intently across the table, "how a genuine 'love affair,' as you term it, will change a man. And how prone he is to think he has found the only jewel in the whole world worth winning!"

Helen glanced up from her plate with a smile, and a careless answer was on her lips. But something in the face opposite her caused her quickly to drop her eyes, and the words remained unspoken.

Later in the evening, after a season of merry interchange of badinage, when the remembrance of her momentary confusion had been quite obliterated from her mind by the sparkle of her guest's changing mood, she again glanced up. The same intense expression of the eyes she had noted at the dinner table caused her own to droop, and this time her cheek grew slightly pale.

Then, before she could recover her composure, eager words of love were poured into her ear.

She listened quietly, and did not remove her eyes from her clasped hands until the earnest voice had ceased.

"I am very, very sorry," she began, but her companion interrupted: "No. I will not listen to what you are going to say. You mean to reject me. But I will wait. I will give you time

to think it over. Six months, a year, if you choose. Until then we will be friends—just as we have been.”

“But I do not need time,” she began. Then she paused. Was she, after all, so certain of herself? The mental question brought a quick answer from the heart, but she had lost her chance for replying.

Rodney Jackson was standing before her, his hand extended to bid her good night, and he was saying in his merriest tone, “Just an everyday episode. Forget all about it. Don’t be afraid of me. I go up on old Tacoma in a few days. Good-bye until I come down. Then I will call and tell you about my adventures.”

He was gone before she could utter a word. A hasty glance into his face as he turned away had revealed it to her as calm, as carelessly merry, as in his lightest moods.

Had she been asleep and dreaming when she had fancied she listened to those burning words of love but a few moments before?

She gave a sigh of relief and whispered to her own heart, “He was not in earnest. He does not care for me, after all. I am so glad.”

CHAPTER IV.

IN CAMP.

IT was a starry autumn night. A party of four young men were gathered about a camp fire. If one looked closely a fifth figure was discerned, sitting somewhat back in the shadows.

Cards were brought out. All of those in the ring of light about the blazing logs save one were eager for a game.

"Why won't you join us, Holcombe?" said the youngest of the group. "It's not fair to rob us of an evening of fun just for a whim." The speaker, who was Oscar Henderson, smiled persuasively.

"Yes; do be a good fellow and take a hand. We can't play unless you join us," added Sidney Gordon.

"No use to urge him," said Edgar Fielding. "I've seen him tried before. He's like a rock where cards or whiskey are concerned. I would like to know what turned him into a crank along those lines."

"Would you?" Stuart Holcombe said, with a smile. "Well, I have no objection to telling you. As the story has an element of danger, perhaps you will find it interesting. Put up your cards if you wish me to begin."

As Stuart was known to be a good story-teller, the cards were quickly placed out of sight, and the three young men threw themselves in easy attitudes about him. They made a picturesque group in the glow of the blazing brush of the camp fire.

"When I was about eighteen," he began in a musing tone, "I had a great desire to become a cow-boy. So, about a year after the fever took me, my father placed me with Mr. Frank Arnold, who was the owner of an immense cattle ranch about two hundred miles south of our home."

An exclamation of surprise from Oscar Henderson caused the speaker to pause and say, as he gazed smilingly into the boyish face: "I see you are astonished that I was permitted to enter upon the free, wild life of a cow-boy. My father withstood my entreaties for many months, but after a time my eagerness and continued pleadings wore him out. So he at last consented, feeling sure that such a life would not long satisfy the cravings of my nature. He

was right. I remained with Mr. Arnold only eighteen months. Then I gladly returned to civilization and to my studies.

“For a time, however, I was as happy as a king in my chosen line of work. After I had learned something of the business, my employer wanted to send a large drove of cattle East. I was chosen to aid in driving them to the nearest point from which they could be shipped by rail.

“To get the cattle to this point was no easy matter. The second night we were out proved dark and threatening. The cattle were carefully herded, the ponies were cared for, and then we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable.

“When supper was over, cards were brought out, and with them a flask of whiskey. We knew we must not imbibe to intoxication, for, while Mr. Arnold was a liberal-hearted man, drunkenness was not tolerated in any one whom he employed. A merry evening, however, over a glass of hot punch was considered all right.

“So we sipped our punch and played cards for an hour or two. Small stakes were put up, and I became quite excited over the game, and thought we were having a royal time.

“All at once something frightened the cattle. We heard them lowing and moving uneasily

about. Then came a sound which made us all spring to our feet. A call of alarm from the herdsmen reached us.

“‘The cattle have stampeded,’ cried Tom Lester, who was the leader. ‘To the saddle, boys. Head them off and turn them back. I will guard the pass. Be careful about the cañon. Don’t try to cross it. The cattle will keep on this side unless goaded over.’

“We were off like a flash. As my broncho leaped into the darkness, Lester called out: ‘Do your best, Holcombe. Pluck’s the word to-night. I look to you to turn those cattle back.’

“I felt very important. I was the youngest of the party, yet here was Lester putting upon my shoulders the responsibility of turning back that drove of frightened cattle.

“Insensibly I straightened myself in the saddle, and threw the reins loosely over the pony’s neck. He was a mettlesome fellow, and as my spurred heel struck his side, he leaped forward on a run.

“I knew I must move out beyond the line of stampeding cattle, in order to get ahead of them. So I lightly touched the rein from time to time, directing the pony to the right, as the drove was upon my left.

"I had been riding for half an hour perhaps, when my broncho suddenly gathered himself together, and made a tremendous leap forward. " 'An ugly ditch to cross at night,' I muttered, as I patted his neck encouragingly, and urged him on. I had to trust him to find the way, but he had been bred to the business, and seemed to know exactly what was needed. He was nimble and sure-footed, besides being swift, so I felt no fear in giving him the rein.

"When I had turned to the right of the flying cattle, the other two boys had taken the left. We hoped gradually to press the cattle together, and, getting ahead of them, join forces in turning them back.

"That there was danger in this we well knew. To get in the way of a drove of several hundred cattle on a stampede means a risk of being trampled to death, unless your pony is swift and reliable, and also, in case the cattle cannot be halted and turned, the way of escape is an open and unimpeded one.

"I knew very little of the country over which I was riding. My only dread, however, was the cañon. It was narrow, but deep and dangerous. I felt sure, however, as Lester had said, the cattle would not try to cross it unless goaded over by fear. As nearly as I could judge, I had

been riding about forty minutes, when I thought, from the sound of the stampeding cattle, that I was sufficiently in advance to begin moving in upon them. The trampling of their feet, and an occasional lowing, seemed to come from my rear.

"I gave a long, shrill whistle. No answer came. Evidently I had gotten beyond the possibility of making my comrades hear my signal. But this was not strange, as the sound of the thundering hoof-beats of the cattle might easily drown the whistle, however piercing I might make it.

"I spurred my pony and turned him squarely across the route I thought the cattle were coming. At the same time I sent out another far-reaching signal to my mates."

"Hist!" exclaimed Oscar Henderson at this point, in a low tone. "What is that sound? I have heard it before. It is like the stealthy approach of some animal."

All listened attentively. Stuart Holcombe instantly stood upon his feet, and gazed intently beyond the circle of light thrown out by the camp fire. He was the eldest of the group, and felt that upon him in large measure rested the responsibility of their safety, although Fielding was the acknowledged leader of the party.

CHAPTER V.

A CRITICAL MOMENT.

AT this juncture the silent figure which had been somewhat removed from the others, arose and came forward.

The light showed him to be a lithe, strong-limbed youth of some sixteen or seventeen years of age.

"What is it, Jones?" Gordon and Fielding asked in the same breath, while Oscar Henderson's wide open eyes echoed their question.

"Nothing. I heard the rustling, but it's only the wind among the branches of a dead tree out yonder."

"Jones has had experience, and his ears are keen," Edgar Fielding responded, again settling himself into an easy attitude. "I am sorry we interrupted your story, Holcombe. Go on."

"Yes, for you were just at the exciting part," added Gordon.

The young lawyer resumed his seat and his story without further words.

"Just as I had sent out my shrill whistle, my broncho again, without warning, gathered him-

self together and gave a tremendous leap. It was so swift and terrible, in the darkness, that I held my breath and clung to him with a feeling of sudden danger.

"But he recovered himself in a moment, and sped onward. His feet had seemed to slip, just for one instant, and the sound of falling rock and gravel smote upon my startled ear.

"‘The ditch again’, I exclaimed to myself, stroking the pony’s neck, and partially checking his wild race. But his blood was warm, and he impatiently flung up his head, as though asking to continue his speed.

"Once more I sent out my signal, and this time an answering one, directly before me, greeted my eager ears. My friends were near, the cattle were behind us, and now we would see if their flight could be checked.

"I need not linger over the next two hours. Serious danger menaced us, but the whiskey I had taken had gone to my head just enough to make me oblivious to everything but the hope of winning praise from Lester. My companions were trained cow-boys, but I feel sure that I faced more danger that night than they.

"It was three hours before our task was ended. The cattle had then become quiet, had been slowly turned back, and were again resting as

quietly as though the idea of a stampede had never entered their stupid heads.

"Lester praised us warmly for our night's work, and his eyes rested upon me with such approval as filled my heart with keen pleasure.

" 'You'll do,' he said, in a low tone, when the others had gone aside for a moment. 'A fellow who meets a stampede for the first time as you have done to-night, needn't be afraid of what'll become of him. Mr. Arnold won't lose sight of you, youngster.'

"I felt two inches taller after I had listened to those words, and immediately resolved to meet, without flinching, any danger the future might bring, rather than forfeit his good opinion.

"By dawn the next morning I was out to discover, if possible, what had been the obstacle over which my broncho had made those tremendous leaps.

"Do you know, boys, it makes me giddy, even now, to recall the facts.

"Unwittingly I had partially lost my bearings in the darkness, and had ridden across the cañon. The liquor which I had taken had confused me. The cañon was hundreds of feet deep, and at the points where I crossed it was from twelve to fifteen feet from brink to brink.

"The marks of the pony's feet were plainly visible upon the edges, and at the last place I had crossed a great piece of earth and rock had apparently broken off and tumbled into the gorge. What saved me from going with it, I do not know.

"I peered down the chasm, between the points where the broncho gave his flying leaps, and saw, to my horror, the mangled remains of several steers lying on the rocks below. They had either been pushed off by the drove, or they had rushed headlong over. But the main body had kept to the left of the cañon, as Lester had thought would be the case.

"In my eager endeavor to be the first to turn the cattle back, I had, it seems, turned too far to the right, and ridden my broncho to the chasm's dizzy edge. Had he been less nimble and sure-footed my fate, and his, would have been sealed.

"As I stood and looked down into that awful gorge, the thought of death and eternity aroused my soul as nothing before had ever done. And there I made a vow, that, so long as I should live, I would never again touch a drop of intoxicating liquor, or play another game of cards.

"I bought a pocket Bible the first opportunity, and ever since I have tried to live as a man

should who knows not the moment he may be called to stand in the presence of his Maker.

“Some men find God in the church; some are converted at home. I found him on the edge of that awful chasm, and my whole heart went out to him in love and gratitude that he had not permitted me to rush into his holy presence full of the fumes of whiskey, and with oaths still warm upon my lips which I had uttered in the excitement of gambling.

“Never ask me to play cards again, boys, nor expect me to touch a drop of anything that can intoxicate. I would sooner die than do either.”

A profound silence held the little group as Stuart Holcombe finished his story. Something akin to awe had stolen over the thoughtless hearts of those around him as they listened to his closing words.

“Eternity is a big word,” Sidney Gordon presently said. “I don’t like the sound of it, and I am not surprised it made you feel solemn when you found how nearly you had touched it.”

A rare smile came to Stuart’s lips.

“If only I could make you understand, boys, how sweet that word is to me now, I am sure you would want to learn the secret which

changed a terror into a joy. Twice since that night I have consciously faced death and eternity."

He paused. Four pairs of eyes gazed expectantly into his. But he did not speak until Gordon asked in a low voice, "How did you feel?"

"As a man might who, leaning on the arm of a trusted and mighty Friend, awaits the signal that is to introduce him into the supreme joy of his life."

"Oh! come now, that is rather strong, isn't it?" Edgar Fielding exclaimed. "I can fancy a fellow might face death without fear if he were a sure-enough Christian; but to count it a joy"—and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Yet it is true," Stuart calmly answered, and the light which shone in his eyes carried conviction to one, at least, of his listeners. "To know Jesus Christ as an ever-present, loving Friend, who longs inexpressibly to make us sharers of his joy while we are upon earth, as well as participants of his glory hereafter, revolutionizes all things. Death, thereafter, only means release from trial, and care, and discouragement. We go with our Friend and our Lord, apart from all danger and turmoil, into a life which is ever unfolding new delights to our

eager hearts. And the possibilities of that life are limitless."

A deep sigh broke from the lips of the outermost listener to these clearly spoken words. It came from the boy who had lingered in the shadow of the trees until Oscar Henderson's exclamation of danger had brought him into their midst.

He now arose and abruptly walked beyond the circle of fading light into the darkness beyond.

"Clam Jones is a queer fellow, but I like him immensely," Oscar said, and Gordon added, "I wonder if they call him Clam because he keeps his mouth so closely shut? Well, anyhow, I am glad he knows how to handle the sauce-pans and skillets. I hope he will turn us out something dandy for breakfast. Let's turn in, boys, and be ready for a square meal and a ten-mile tramp to-morrow."

The others agreed to this proposition, and soon the little encampment was peacefully slumbering, unmindful of danger, and heedless of any disaster which might be overshadowing them.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNSAVORY ACQUAINTANCE.

IN the outskirts of Tacoma, and half hidden under low-growing trees and shrubbery as if it were ashamed of its existence and was trying to escape public notice, stood a miserable shanty, the home of a man whose appearance was as disreputable as that of the hovel that sheltered him.

Nat Jones was the name by which he was known in the community. He had been in Tacoma only two or three years, and where he had drifted from no one knew, and few cared to enquire.

He had lain all night in a drunken stupor upon his miserable bed in a corner of the dingy room which the bright rays of the morning sunshine showed to be untidy in the extreme, and in perfect accord with its occupant.

As he arose to a sitting posture and looked about him, an angry oath fell from his lips.

His glance rested on a neatly-spread couch in the further end of the room.

"Clam, you Clam, where are you?" he called. As no one replied, he muttered, "What business had he to get up and go away before I was awake? He's getting too high-headed to bear with. I'll have to teach him a thing or two before long. He seems to have forgotten that little interview I had with him down by the Sound not long ago," and he chuckled. The laugh was not a pleasant one, and the expression upon his face was repulsive in the extreme.

And yet, in spite of his squalid surroundings and the evident brutality of his nature, there were evidences in his face and bearing of some former life wholly dissimilar to the present.

His brow was broad and massive, and his features, had there not been marks upon them of the debased nature within, might have been called aristocratic. Indeed, had he been free from the fumes of strong drink, one could even imagine him possessed of fine intellectual powers.

Heaped in a pile on an old chest in the outer room were a number of shabby books. One volume, which showed marks of long usage, bore the name of William Shakespeare on the title page.

At first glance one was surprised to see it in this man's possession. Yet a closer survey of

the contour of the head and the lines of the countenance impressed the beholder with the fact that here was the wreck of what had once been a refined and cultured man. It was equally plain that the cause of his ruin could be summed up in the one word "whiskey."

He made his way into the other apartment of the tumble-down building, in which was a fireplace, a table, and a bench, some cracked dishes, and one or two cooking utensils.

He found some water, and after a vigorous application of it to his face and head, he appeared to feel better.

He lifted a tin pan from the table and discovered under it some wheaten cakes, two hard-boiled eggs, and a small piece of fried ham. A pot of coffee stood near, and he drank, with nothing to modify its bitter strength, a large cup of the black beverage.

As he did so he muttered, "What time did he get up, I'd like to know, to cook this breakfast, and then be gone so long that the coffee is stone cold. Bah! I need something hot," and he looked about for kindling and matches.

At this moment there came a rap on the door, and in answer to his surly "come in," a tidily-dressed young woman stood revealed on the threshold.

She greeted him smilingly and said, "Clam sed ez how yer'd want yer coffee het up, and I 'lowed I'd do it fur ye."

"Where has Clam gone? Why isn't he here to attend to things himself?" was the man's quick query.

"Law, sir, don' yer know he's gone on a huntin' trip 'long wi' some young gents frum the town? He went off las' night fore yer come in."

An angry oath fell from her listener's lips.

"What business had he to go without my consent? Who will look after me while he is gone, I should like to know?"

The woman regarded him with a shrewd twinkle in her eyes as she said, "He 'lowed, arter this fust mornin,' yer could look arter yer-self. He sed he'd done left meal, an' meat, an' flour, an' 'lasses, an' coffee 'nuff ter last er week er ten days in ther cubberd. An' thes plenty o' wood ou't the door, reddy cut. He done well by yer, ter my thinkin', an' it'll be yer own fault ef yer goes hongry. Shell I make a fire fer ye, an' het up yer coffee? It's mighty easy done ef yer says so."

"No. Go about your business. You're forever upholding the boy in his ways, and making him think I'm hard on him. Be off with you,"

and he made a gesture as though to push her from the door.

She laughed, but did not move until she had fully spoken her mind.

"Yer dasn't tech a woman, mean es yer air ter Clam. Ef yer did, yer know my man would haul yer over, an' yer don't want'er fall inter his hans, yer know. Yes, I do say yer hard on ther boy, an' I's glad he's runned off. I mos' wisht he'd never come back fer yer ter cuss an' maul aroun' like yer dotes on doin'. Sum day, ef yer keeps on that-er-way, ye'll git what ye deserves. Now I feels better, an' I'm goin'."

She passed calmly out, amid fierce curses from her angry listener. As she stepped away, she caught these words, "Just wait until he comes back, and he will see how I'll settle with him! Run off, has he? Well, when I'm done with him, he'll not be able to run very fast for one while. There is some comfort in that thought."

"I hopes ter goodness Clam won't never cum back agin," the woman thought, with a visible shudder. "Ef he do, I shouldn't wonder ef ole Nat kilt him, out an' out. Ef he air ther boy's father, it don't stan ter reason that he's got ther right ter beat him ter death. I sh'd think Clam'd fight fer hissself, fore he'd take sich flog-gins. But I guess he's scairt ter hit back, fer

he knows th' old'n air pow'ful strong when he's
riled, an' they do say he allus carries a boeey
knife in his buzzum. My! Ain't I thankful
ter God thet my Tom don't tech ther whiskey!"

Well she might be thankful!

CHAPTER VII.

A WESTERN LASSIE.

A SPARKLING face, with soulful eyes, smiling lips which never wore the same expression for two moments together, such was Floy Fielding.

At the present moment she was standing upon the piazza of her charming country home listening with eager pleasure to the peculiar "hônck, hônck" which came from a large flock of wild geese. They were feeding near an island in the Sound, close to which her father's ranch was situated.

"The brant are back," she joyfully exclaimed, clapping her hands gleefully. "Edgar was not sure whether they had come or not. I hope he knows it now, and I hope they will spend a part of their time near enough the Sound to shoot some of them. Oh! dear. Why was not I a boy as well as Edgar?" The last words were uttered with a sigh and a frown, both of which vanished in the radiance of a quick smile as her mother said, "And what would I do without my

merry lassie to make sunshine and music for me all the day long, if you were a boy?"

The girl, over whose bright head nineteen summers had rolled, stepped swiftly to the matron's side, clasped both her hands around her neck and replied by asking, "Is your naughty hoyden any joy to you, mamma dear?"

Mrs. Fielding stroked her pink cheek as she answered, "No words can tell what you are to your mother's heart, my darling. Life is another thing to me since you returned from college. Edgar is a dear son, but—you are different."

The soft eyes which were looking earnestly into her own suddenly grew misty, and Floy, with a laugh, brushed her hand across them, saying, "Then I will never again wish to be a boy. But think of the fun and excitement Edgar is having out on this hunting trip! Why could not a party of girls get up such an outing? The Eastern girls in college were horrified when they found that I could shoot as well as my brother, and ride a horse without a saddle, not to mention my skill in rowing and sailing. Some of them seemed to look upon me as a barbarian after they learned about these doubtful accomplishments." She threw back her head with a graceful toss peculiar to her, and burst into a

gleeful laugh, which told how wholesome and healthy she was in heart and physique.

"Even for a Western lassie my Floy is a good deal of a Tom-boy," the mother said. "I am forced to admit this fact. Your father is responsible for the failing, if I can call it one, for he always insisted upon training you exactly as Edgar was trained. It used to trouble me a little until I found that my girlie has a true, womanly heart under all her merry ways."

"How thankful I am to papa for his training! Oh! I wouldn't be like those poor dolls in college for the world. What do they know about comfort, or fun, or—or—anything that is worth living for? Afraid to walk in the wind for fear of freckles! In terror lest the sweet, bright sunshine should burn their pale faces into some hint of health. I would rather be an Indian squaw, or a veritable gypsy, than one of those bloodless, simpering creatures."

As Floy spoke the pink deepened in her cheeks, and her eyes flashed mild fire. Then she added, "Really, mamma, why couldn't a party of girls go out on a tramp with tent and fishing rods and guns? Papa could go along to look after us. I know three or four who would be delighted to take such an outing."

"What would people say?"



SNOGUALMIC FALLS, TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT FEET HIGH.

“Who would care what they said, so long as we behaved ourselves and only enjoyed what papa thought right for us to enjoy.” This was said somewhat scornfully. Then she added, confidentially, “Mr. Gordon thinks it is all right for girls to be merry and natural, and to live out of doors as much as they like. He told me so. And he said he wished I was his sister. You know what a perfect gentleman he is, and an Eastern-bred man, too, until he went to Portland a year or two since. I think he is splendid, and I am so glad Edgar likes him. As long as such a fastidious young man as he approves of my ways, you need not feel alarmed about people’s opinions. I do not doubt but he would think my idea of getting up a girls’ hunting trip just the thing.”

“Especially if he could go along,” Mrs. Fielding smilingly suggested.

Floy laughed and shook her head.

“It would be delightful to have him with us, but it would not do. I can see that.”

Just at this moment a lad came around the house, bearing in his hands a splendid wild turkey, and several smaller birds. Floy gave a cry of pleasure, and advanced toward him.

“Who sent them?” she said, reaching for the game.

"Dunno. A gemman cumed ter our cabin an' gimme er quarter ter fech 'em ter Miss Flonce Fielding. Is you her?"

"This is the lady," Mrs. Fielding replied, with dignity. She saw that Floy was occupied over a card which she had found fastened to the neck of the big bronze bird. The latter proved so heavy that she was glad to place it upon a chair while she tried to decipher the hastily written words.

"Miss Fielding: Will you and your mother accept of the first trophies of our hunt? We are having a glorious time.

Yours truly, S. W. GORDON."

The girl laughed happily as she said, holding the card for her mother to read, "Is it not nice in him to remember us? I wonder how far he had to walk to get them to the boy?"

The lad, who was listening, instantly replied, "Mos' five mile, 'cause he 'lowed he had ter git back ter Buffalo Gulch 'fore dark. An' it air five good mile ter thet place, shore."

"And where is your cabin?" Floy inquired.

"Jes' on the aidge o' ther woods ez yer goes ter Skittle's ranche."

Floy and her mother exchanged glances. The

boy had had a long tramp, and Mrs. Fielding told him to go around to the kitchen and she would give him a lunch. He gladly obeyed her directions, and after Floy was left alone her lips parted in a smile, and she murmured, "How lovely it was in Mr. Gordon to take so much trouble to send the game! He is nice enough to be a Washington man, born and bred."

The fair Western girl could hardly speak higher words of commendation than these.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF BASE.

THE hunting party had been out two days. It was early morning of the third.

The four young men were grouped about the embers of the fire over which Clam Jones had prepared breakfast. They were discussing their plans for the day.

The little tent had been struck an hour ago, and was compactly folded away. They were only awaiting Clam's finishing touches to the articles he was expected to pack, to be off.

"After your tramp of yesterday you will hardly feel like doing much climbing to-day," Fielding remarked to Gordon, with a mischievous glance into his face.

The latter's evident admiration for pretty Floy amused her brother, for he looked upon her, in spite of her two years in college, as still a child.

Gordon laughed.

"What is a ten-mile tramp when one wants to please a fair lady? Your mother and sister

were glad to hear of our welfare, and I am sure they will not scorn the game. The walk was nothing. I am sorry we had not bagged some venison for them, or a bear steak. Perhaps luck will favor us to-day."

At this moment a party of two men was seen approaching. The young hunters observed them closely, and as they drew near Stuart exclaimed, "Hallock and Jackson, as I live!"

"The smoke of your camp fire told us your whereabouts," the foremost of the two said, smiling upon the young men. It was Rodney Jackson.

His keen eyes glanced over the group. He looked older than he had seemed on the night when he dined with Helen Holcombe. He might have been thirty-five years of age.

"Are you out for a hunt?" Stuart Holcombe asked, as he shook hands with the new-comers.

"Yes and no. We are bound for the summit of the giant, yonder, if we can make it," Jackson answered, pointing to the snow-capped peak of Mount Tacoma. Stuart stared.

"At this season? Such ascents are always taken in June or July, are they not?"

"Usually. But I have got to complete a geological survey, and it must be done now. Miller is going with me, and he vows you must join

us. We have come out of our way to find you. Mr. Henderson told us you were out in this direction, and bade me capture you. Your camp fire, or the smoke of it, rather, led us straight to you. Will you come with us?"

Jackson's companion, Hallock Miller, had been a boyhood friend of Stuart Holcombe's in Oregon. His physique was powerful and his face genial, but the lines about his mouth were weak.

He gave the impression of having lived on a lower moral plane than either of his companions. He now spoke: "Of course he will come. Haven't I heard him say, time and again, that he must take another climb up the side of old Tacoma before he could rest satisfied? That other trip of ours was rather unsatisfactory, you know." He laughed as he noted Stuart's rueful expression.

"I should think so."

Seeing curiosity on the faces of the others, Holcombe added, in an explanatory tone, "We tried to make the ascent last year, but were driven back by a storm. Hal is right in saying that ever since I have longed for a chance to see defeat exchanged for victory."

"Where are your traps—tent, blankets, and provisions?" he now inquired, noticing that both men were empty-handed.

"At the station, back yonder. We came out in search of you. Hallock was sure you would go, and I wanted another man along—one of the right sort," was Jackson's answer. "Can't you decide at once to join us? We have no time to waste."

"How about these friends of mine?" was Stuart's reply.

"Take us along," Gordon exclaimed, with shining eyes.

"Yes. It is the trip of all others I have wanted to make," Fielding quickly added. Oscar Henderson's boyish face flushed as he said, "If Holcombe goes, I want to be one of the crowd."

Rodney Jackson's keen eyes ran over the group, taking in Clam Jones, who, his preparations completed, now stood behind Fielding, listening with eager face to the conversation.

"There will be exposure in making the ascent at this season. Too large a party would bother me and add to the danger. No, only Holcombe can go," was Jackson's reply, after he had made his brief survey. But his glance lingered on Gordon. The latter hastily said, "I can brave whatever Holcombe can. I am used to hardship, and am no coward. And this will be my

one opportunity to make the ascent. Long before summer comes I must be in Portland."

Again Rodney Jackson surveyed the young man's noble, well-knit figure. Then he said, "Well, if you choose to take the risk, you can come."

Then such a clamor arose from Fielding and Oscar Henderson, in which Clam Jones, losing his usual reticence, joined, as caused Jackson to turn toward Hallock Miller and say: "We might take them a part of the way. They could see much that would interest them, and then turn back before the real hardship begins."

This was soon decided upon, and the entire party started toward the station where Jackson and Miller had left their traps.

"We are going a new route, up the great Carbon Glacier, on the northern slope of the mountain," Jackson explained to Holcombe as they walked along.

As they neared the point where they were to board the train, Hallock Miller laughingly inquired, as he ran his eye over Oscar Henderson's youthful face and noted Clam Jones' boyish, albeit, muscular frame, "Are you good for a twelve-mile tramp before sunset? The train stops at Wilkeson, you know, and it is a nine-mile walk to where we begin the ascent. We

must cover as much ground as possible to-day,"

Both youths declared themselves able to endure a longer tramp than the one before them, and Clam Jones quietly said, "I once walked twenty miles in six hours. Half of it was the hardest kind of mountain climbing. It was in Oregon, and we were going up to June peak. That was three years ago; I am certain I can do better than that now."

"I have been on June peak," Hallock responded, with a quick glance into the boy's enkindled eyes. "The climb is hard, but the view is glorious. You went in summer, of course."

"In July. It was terribly hot when we started, but we found it cold enough before we got back."

"Undoubtedly. I recall the icy chill of the air. Just after we passed the last cabin on our way up a sudden shower overtook us. The wind was so keen we shivered and wished for our overcoats."

"I suppose you find Washington a finer State than Oregon," Oscar Henderson remarked, with pardonable pride in his tone.

Hallock Miller laughed. His mood was genial, and Oscar's question amused him.

"I will answer you by quoting some words

from an eccentric man who had recently visited Niagara Falls. He was looking out of the window late in the afternoon, when a friend asked him if the falls were not glorious. He ran his eyes over the glowing western sky and replied, 'Sunset is grand, but Niagara is first-rate.' "

Oscar's face flushed as the drift of the young man's answer dawned on him. Hallock noted the discomfiture and hastened to add, "Washington is more than first-rate, of course. But I am naturally fond of my native State. Sometimes I have regretted that Holcombe's influence induced me to follow him after he fell so violently in love with yours. But 'All's well that ends well' the poet tells us, and I am hoping that I shall yet consider it a lucky day that brought me to Washington."

Jackson and Stuart Holcombe, who were in advance of the others, now turned and glanced back. The latter exclaimed, "I heard the whistle. We must hurry if we catch the train."

All hastened their steps. A few minutes later the little party were seated in the coach and speeding toward Mount Tacoma.

CHAPTER IX.

A MEMORABLE DAY.

TO each one of the number that trip was a never-to-be-forgotten one.

From the small mining town where the railroad ended, their route lay through dense forests.

Laden as they were with tents, blankets, and necessary provisions, as well as with their hunting accoutrements, their progress was unavoidably slow. Game was sighted several times, but Jackson's advice was that they push on without pausing to capture it.

The trail they followed was a dim one. When they at last came to Carbon river, which takes its name from the great glacier from whose base it issues, they found its bed half filled with massive rocks and boulders, which lifted their heads far above the fretting waters about them. Holcombe stopped and said, "As we are to ascend the glacier, why not shorten the distance by following the river bed? We can easily do this by stepping from rock to rock. See how compactly they lie."

"All right," was Jackson's hearty response, while Miller and Gordon were quick to endorse the suggestion.

"Anything to get to the foot of the glacier as speedily as possible," was the exclamation of the former, and Gordon added, "It will be fine sport to go up the river bed. I once did this in the East, although I was not laden as we now are. One of our party missed his footing before we got to the point for which we were aiming, and his unexpected bath afforded the rest of us no end of fun."

"I shall feel sorry for the fellow who takes an unpremeditated dip into this water," Jackson responded. "It is ice cold, you see, for the river issues, full grown, from its glacial cradle only a short distance beyond us."

They proceeded cautiously on their way, the younger members of the party pausing now and then to take in the picturesqueness of their surroundings."

Jackson and Holcombe led, and kept nearly abreast. An exclamation from Oscar Henderson caused the latter to glance quickly around. The youth had slipped, but Clam Jones' strong arm reached him and drew him to the rock before his feet touched the seething waters.

As Stuart turned to continue his way, he sud-

denly missed Jackson. A splashing between two big boulders caused him to look sharply down. Yes, there was their leader, silently striving to regain his footing upon the rocks, but slipping back into his icy bath at every attempt.

Holcombe laid aside the pack he was carrying, and hastened to reach down his strong right hand for the other to grasp. The unlucky but dauntless surveyor was soon standing beside his rescuer, laughing but shivering. He glanced ruefully at his drenched garments but said, in a hearty tone, "I am glad it was I who took the plunge rather than one of those youngsters. I am used to it, although I confess I don't exactly crave another dip."

From time to time the entire party was compelled to pause for a few moments to regain breath. They found it hard work, especially when long continued, to keep their footing on the rocks. At one point the boulders disappeared, and a sand bar, submerged in the water, confronted them.

"We will have to wade over," was Jackson's verdict, as he stepped boldly in. Stuart paused to remove shoes and stockings before following him.

"I didn't know I was going back to boyhood days so completely while on this jaunt," he re-

marked. "To take a wade, barefooted, in a mountain stream, is certainly sport."

But he found it rather painful sport before he again reached the rocks, for the water grew colder and deeper at every step.

The others, with shouts of merriment, watched him over, and then, with boots and hose in hand, and pants rolled to the knee, followed.

From this point until they paused, at sunset, spent and bedraggled, but merry, and still two miles from the glacier's foot, Jackson uttered not a word. Then he said, "I have been thinking what an idiot I was to allow those boys to take this tramp," and he looked sharply toward Oscar, Clam and Fielding. The latter heard the words and noted his glance. He answered, with some heat, "When a man has cast his vote for the third time he can hardly be called a boy, can he?"

"Tut, tut! Don't get fretted. You must admit you are hardly a good specimen of an athlete, even though your soul may be as bold as was Cæsar's. It is sinew and muscle that are needed on a tramp like this as much as courage," was Jackson's answer. His tone was kindly, although his words held a sting for Edgar, who was sensitive over his lack of height and breadth. He was wiry and active, but his

graceful and rather effeminate appearance was a source of constant annoyance to him.

"We are still two good miles from the foot of the glacier, where I had planned to be long before this hour," Jackson continued. "For the sake of the youngsters, however, we will stop here and pitch our tents for the night."

"Yonder is a mossy bank, just the place for us," Gordon exclaimed, and all were soon busy preparing for the night. A fire was kindled, over which Jackson hovered with evident enjoyment.

"If one were nervous, the roar of the river, not to mention the thunder from yonder waterfall, might disturb his slumber," Holcombe remarked to Gordon, who replied, "Indeed, yes. But is not that a glorious cascade? I have rarely seen a finer."

Wild and beautiful as were their surroundings, they were too weary to spend much time in admiration over the scenery. Supper was soon dispatched, and at an early hour the entire party were sleeping.

Daybreak saw them again on their way. At the foot of the glacier they paused to admire the grandeur of its proportions.

Then they hurried on and up, for Jackson had determined to scale the glacier's face, selecting the lowest point for this feat.

"You may go with us to our first halting place," he said to Fielding, Oscar and Clam. "Then you must turn back."

Holcombe advised that the tent and guns of Fielding's party should be left at the foot of the glacier until they returned. This suggestion was acted upon.

The climbers had covered a goodly portion of their perilous ascent, when a dense cloud suddenly swept over them, completely enveloping them in its fleecy folds.

The air grew icy cold, the wind arose, and Jackson whispered to Holcombe: "I wish those boys were at home with their mothers. This means a mountain storm."

Snow soon began to fall.

"Hug the rocks, and do not stir for your lives," was Jackson's quick command.

CHAPTER X.

A TRYING HOUR.

EACH one of the party crouched down against the forbidding breast of the glacier, their bodies penetrated with a chill that seemed to pierce the marrow.

Gordon, who was close to Holcombe, spoke in a low voice, "This is equal to some of my experiences among the Alps. Our prospect of getting to the top of the mountain, or to the bottom again, either, is rather forlorn just now. But this storm won't last. It is only a sudden flurry, a reminder of what one would encounter in earnest should one venture up a little later."

Stuart smiled as serenely as though the warm sunshine were still bathing the mountain instead of falling snow and piercing winds holding high carnival. He answered cheerily, for he saw, in spite of his closing words, that Gordon's face was quite pale. He knew their position was critical in the extreme.

"I have a recipe that keeps the nerves steady and heart cheery no matter what the outer

world may bring. And it's one that never fails when used according to directions. I can recommend it because I have tested it thoroughly."

Jackson heard the words, and quickly asked, "What is the recipe?"

Before Holcombe could answer a fiercer gust of wind than before swept over them, hurling pieces of frozen crystal into their faces and necks with painful and suggestive force.

All pressed still closer to the rocks, which were held in place by the ice of the glacier, and formed a firm resting place for them now, as well as a secure foothold when they were climbing.

As the blast abated, Jackson repeated his question, "What is the recipe?"

A warm glow sprang to Stuart's face as he answered, "The one King David gives us. He says, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord!' When a man has a secure Refuge in which to hide, how can he ever fear?"

"But I fancy, even if I knew how to find it, I should consider the Refuge worse than the storm," was Jackson's swift comment, and Gordon added, "I am like you. I have always appreciated the words found somewhere in the Bible, I think, which say, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'"

A troubled look crept for an instant into Stuart Holcombe's eyes. He quietly said, "That is because you do not know him nor understand his love. When once you have felt his mighty arms enfolding you, you will feel as secure when seeming dangers threaten you as did King David himself. That is, if you are in the line of duty and right."

Conversation had to be carried on in jerks. It was some moments before Jackson ventured to raise his face to reply. Then he said with the quick utterance habitual to him, "Seeming danger? When a man is hunted like a wild beast, or sawn asunder, the danger is actual, is it not?"

"In one sense, yes. But the vivid presence of God is more actual to those who truly know him in a vital union of love than any danger or pain can possibly be. The triumphant death of the martyrs prove this."

Fielding and Oscar Henderson were too absorbed in the discomforts and danger of their situation to pay attention to this broken conversation. The others of the party were glad to listen. It occupied the mind and helped divert them from the dreadful possibilities confronting them.

Jackson's teeth were now chattering with the

cold so that it was with difficulty he could speak.

"That is too transcendental for me. I am glad, though, if you can get comfort out of it." Then for the first time he noticed the glow that still suffused Stuart's face. He asked, in a tone of surprise, "Holcombe, aren't you cold?"

"Yes, I am cold. Colder than I ever remember to have been in my life. But"—he hesitated. Before he could continue another blast came, and all again bent their heads between their knees and crouched still closer against the rocks.

As the gale passed and Holcombe again lifted his head, he caught the earnest eyes of Clam Jones fixed upon him. Something in the searching gaze went to the young lawyer's heart.

"That boy does not belong to the common herd," was the thought that came to him. Before he could speak Gordon exclaimed, "The storm is over. See, yonder is the sun! In a few moments it will be as though no freezing wind or snow had been within a hundred miles of us. I have seen such flurries before."

Sure enough, before he finished speaking the sun was brightly shining. Each one of the party was glad to rise from his cramped position as quickly as possible.

Quite a lively scene ensued. Miller and Fielding began it by stamping their feet and swinging their arms in a most energetic manner to restore retarded circulation. The others speedily followed their example. The rocks, in places, formed quite a ledge, and it was while they were on one of these shelf-like projections that the cloud suddenly enveloped them.

"How glorious!" was Holcombe's quick exclamation, as he glanced down the face of the glacier. All followed his gaze.

The cloud had wholly passed, going as quickly as it had come, leaving the atmosphere peculiarly clear.

A downward glance revealed the river, far below, as it issued from an arch at the base of the glacier in a mighty volume of foaming water. As it rushed down the heavy grade of the valley, great boulders were seen to be loosened and swept along in its course. Seeing this, Miller exclaimed, "If I had known the river had such a powerful current as that, I am sure I should not have dared come up its bed as we did."

"I found out something of its force when I fell in," Jackson responded, rubbing his knee. "The current knocked me against the rocks until I almost thought my knee-cap was broken."

An exclamation from Fielding drew all eyes to a point to the right and below where they were standing.

The glacier did not flow straight, but curved here and there as it followed its rocky cradle. This caused it to be rent into numerous crevasses, and as the sunshine now struck one of these points, the effect was wonderful. All the colors of the rainbow were flashed forth.

So impressive was the panorama which now lay stretched before them, that, for the time, they forgot their recent danger and exposure, and revelled in the grandeur presented to their view.

Carbon valley was now seen to be lined with "hills," which, farther East, would be termed mountains. The little party was almost on a level with these peaks. To the southward, the grand old mountain itself loomed before the vision, and as one turned his gaze upon this majestic king, the peaks which had previously seemed fine, dwindled into insignificance.

They were aroused by hearing Jackson suddenly say, "The rest of the ascent will prove what you are made of. Just look above you."

Every eye was turned in the direction indicated.

Hallock Miller gave a prolonged whistle.

CHAPTER XI.

TWELVE THOUSAND FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL.

"I T will take careful climbing to get up there," Gordon exclaimed, as his quick gaze took in the perils which confronted them.

"Yes, but care and a cool head will carry one up all right," was Jackson's response.

The crevasses were seen to become exceedingly numerous as they passed the point where they now stood. And it was apparent that they also became dangerously deep.

"You must descend at once," Jackson added, turning to Fielding, Oscar and Clam. "You can reach good camping ground before night. Be careful as you descend. When you reach the valley you can bring down plenty of game."

No one uttered a word of dissent, although Edgar's brow darkened, and Clam gazed wistfully up the glacier's glittering breast.

"I place these boys in your care, Fielding," Holcombe said, laying a friendly hand on Edgar's arm. "I wish you might go on with us, but Jackson's orders must be obeyed. Besides,

unless you went back, I should have to go myself, for Oscar and Clam could not be trusted to get down alone."

These words were balm to Edgar's wounded vanity.

"All right," was his quick response. "I ought to go down, anyhow, for there is no telling how long Jackson will keep you on the mountain with his surveys and discoveries. Father and mother would be troubled if I stayed out too long. Next summer, though, I am going up this mountain, and neither Jackson nor any one else shall prevent."

So the three at once started down, and Oscar seemed really glad to descend.

"I confess I have had enough of it," he remarked to Holcombe, as he turned away.

"Oscar was not cut out for a hero, although he is a good fellow," was Stuart's thought, as he watched him clamber contentedly down.

The four who remained upon the ledge stood some minutes to watch the others as they descended. Then Jackson said, "They are all right. They are taking it slowly, and I see Fielding is cautious. Now we must be off. Use your eyes; don't get 'rattled,' and we will find a good camping place before the sun sets. I have, in my mind's eye, just the spot we must reach."

"I thought this was a new route to you," Gordon responded, in surprise.

"So it is. But I know the mountain fairly well, and I have an idea of its conformation along this glacier as well as the other routes." He paused and gazed keenly into the three faces grouped about him. Then he continued, "I suppose you all understand something of the danger of an ascent at this season. We have just had a taste of one of the perils that confront us. I declare to you that those were the worst moments I ever remember to have passed. Those boys were on my conscience. What could I have said to their mothers had anything happened to them? Now that they are counted out, I feel free. If any one of you would rather not face what may be before us within the next three days, now is the time to turn back. And we won't consider such a fellow a coward. There is no especial reason why you, Holcombe, or you, Gordon, should make the trip. Miller and I have motives powerful enough to make us smile at the danger because of what lies beyond. With you it is different."

"I am going with you," Stuart quietly responded. "I need just the bracing this climb will bring. Besides, I owe it to Hal not to desert him. He stuck by me when we tried to

make the ascent last year, and I must not prove less faithful." He ended with a cheery laugh which dissipated Jackson's scruples. Gordon merely said, "Push ahead. I love danger for danger's sake, so this trip is just to my mind."

Without further words they began their upward journey.

Before they had proceeded far Miller slipped into a deep crevasse, but clung tenaciously to its edge until Holcombe and Jackson rescued him.

"I don't see how I managed to lose my footing," he remarked, deprecatingly, as he resumed his climbing.

"One does not have to see. He only has to lose it. That is quite enough," was Gordon's rejoinder.

Each picked his way with care as they advanced, for the fissures became more and more numerous and the snow-spans and ice surfaces, which offered them secure foothold, became at each step less easy to find.

"If ever I get down alive, I shall let this climb suffice for the balance of my life," Miller exclaimed in much disgust, as he again slipped and almost went into a yawning crevasse.

All were glad when Jackson at last led the way off the glacier's face, saying, "A steep climb

up yonder moraine will give us our camping spot."

He was right. They soon found themselves in a sheltered place, with wood and water sufficient for their needs.

"I am glad to see water," Holcombe said, as he laid aside his pack. "It is hard lines where one is forced to quench thirst with ice or snow."

"Yes, and it is also dangerous," Jackson responded. "Colic and consuming thirst are the usual results. I was sure we should find just what we needed at about this altitude."

The tent was pitched, a fire built, and soon their long fast was broken.

"I think I never before tasted quite such good coffee," Hallock Miller remarked, as he drained his second cup of the steaming beverage.

"And, somehow, these sandwiches are peculiarly delicious," Holcombe added, helping himself to another.

"I was just wondering what kind of dried fish this was that it had such a fine flavor," Gordon laughingly rejoined.

Jackson silently continued his meal, merely taking time to flash the others a smiling glance between his rapid mouthfuls of food.

They each slept too soundly that night to be

conscious of the moaning winds which arose about midnight, and which clamored angrily about their tent as though determined to tear it to shreds.

Morning, however, dawned clear and beautiful.

Another day of climbing brought them to a beautiful, park-like expanse, with a lovely little lake close by, where Jackson decided to pitch their tent and here make their final encampment.

"We can make excursions from this point, and I can take what observations I wish without changing our quarters," he said.

The rest were well pleased to have it thus, as Jackson had now decided that it was impossible to reach the summit from the northern slope.

"If only the weather continues fine, we can have a rare time," Holcombe rejoined, as his soul drank in the glory above, about, and beneath them.

Even as he spoke a sudden mist shut them in, and soon darkness that could, as Jackson said, "be felt" enveloped them.

The wind arose and the utter solitude of their position smote upon each heart.

CHAPTER XII.

OLD FRIENDS.

WE will now, for a season, transport our readers from the icy peaks of Mount Tacoma to the more genial atmosphere of Portland, Oregon.

The hour is night. Two young men are walking briskly down one of the more obscure streets of the city. Both are handsomely dressed, and neither seem to belong to the vicinity. The taller and handsomer of the two is a young physician by the name of Traver. His companion is a rising young business man of the city known in commercial circles as Edward Hunter, but familiarly called "Ned" by his friends.

These two young men are bound together by ties of the closest friendship. They are frequently named "David and Jonathan" by those who know them best.

"This near cut brings us into rather an unsavory neighborhood," young Hunter remarks, as they pass a saloon from which issue boisterous songs and sounds of revelry.

"Yes, but it is one where I am quite familiar.

One of my patients lives on this street," is the physician's response. Then he adds, "His name is Dick Donelson. He is a fine fellow; a young mechanic. But the whiskey fiend has got hold of him, although he is not yet nineteen years old. Unless he can be freed from the vice, he is doomed."

"Pity so many fellows are travelling that road. Not much hope for them, either, unless a Power stronger than the one which enslaves, can reach them."

"That is true. Yet much might be done for their emancipation if better laws were made. Or if those already enacted could be enforced."

At this moment the sound of angry voices came to them. They were in front of another "hell-trap," this being the name Ned Hunter usually gave to the saloon.

The door was suddenly jerked open and a brawny man, with no gentle hand, thrust a reeling figure from the threshold.

"There, curse ye! Now go. And don't ye dare come in here agin and drink my liquor when ye know ye haint got enough money to pay fur it."

The drunken youth seemed a mere boy. He stumbled and would have fallen had not Dr. Traver sprung forward and caught him.

"It is Dick Donelson," he exclaimed, in a pained voice, as the light fell full on the youthful face.

"Hello! er-aw-eft-taint-er-my dandy-er-aw-d-doctor," he hiccoughed. Then he tried to straighten himself, and his brow darkened. He turned toward the saloon, where the evil face of its keeper peered out of the half-closed door, and said, "D-Doctor-er-won't y-you go-er-t-there an' k-knock that feller down-er-for m-me? He t-took all t-the money I-er-h-had an' t-then he ins-s-ulted me."

"Such a job as that would be exactly to my mind if it was the right thing to do," Ned Hunter said, with an indignant glance at the scowling face in the door-way.

"Yes. He richly deserves it. But I think there is a better way of dealing with him," Dr. Traver replied. "He is selling whiskey to minors. I think we can handle him on that line in a way that will count."

The saloon-keeper caught the words.

An evil light flamed in his eyes. He deliberately opened the door to its full extent and stepped upon the sidewalk. He looked at Dr. Traver from head to foot. Then he said, "I heard yer threat. Let me give yer a word o' warnin'. Whatever cuss dares to meddle wi'

Barney O’Ryan ’ll git into the wust trouble o’ his life. Don’t ye fergit that.”

For a moment Dr. Traver’s eyes flashed. Then he turned away with a scornful smile curling his lips.

“Come,” he said to the youth, around whose shoulders his arm was cast. “I will see you home, Dick. Come quietly, and don’t make a scene.”

“N-no-sir. Er-aw-I hev-g-got-er-to see thet f-feller licked-er-’f-fore I goes er-erway.”

As he spoke he broke away from the young man’s detaining grasp and reeled toward the saloon door where O’Ryan stood.

“Blast ye, Dick Donelson. You git away from here, or I’ll knock the life clean out’n you,” the saloon-keeper cried, doubling his fists and stepping a pace back as though to gain room to carry out his threat.

Both Dr. Traver and Ned Hunter sprang to Dick’s side before the blow was struck. Young Hunter’s teeth were clinched, and his eyes betokened intense passion. Before he could speak Dr. Traver again threw an arm around the drunken youth’s shoulder, at the same time fixing his keen gaze on O’Ryan’s face.

“Don’t strike him,” he said, in a low, tense voice.

There was a magnetic power in his glance and tone that instantly impressed the man before him. He backed slowly away, saying, "Curse ye for a meddlin', fool. Sich swells as you had better keep clear o' this place."

"Ned, help me get this poor fellow home. 'Don't mind that bully. He dare not touch him,'" Dr. Traver said, putting his free hand on Hunter's arm.

He feared his friend's quick temper might lead him into some imprudence.

Ned glanced irefully toward O'Ryan, who returned his gaze with scowling brow and clenched hands, but made no advance toward Dick.

With some difficulty they were at length able to get the besotted youth away. Quite a crowd had collected before this was accomplished. As they walked down the street O'Ryan's voice, thick with rage, called after them, "If ever ye come back here, Dick Donelson, to swindle me out'n another drink, I'll mash yer head fur ye. Jes' carry that fac' home wi' ye."

As the import of his words reached Dick's brain, he began to whimper.

"S-some body-er-might a-l-licked him-er-fur m-me. He gits-er-a-all the money I-I meks. Every-er-l-las' cent of i-it."

"Don't you fret," Ned Hunter replied. "He'll get his deserts. Only give such a fellow as that rope enough, and he will hang himself."

Then he shrugged his shoulders and said, with a rueful glance in Dr. Traver's face, "I haven't been so angry since I was a chap as I was with that brute to-night. I was insane enough, one moment, to have struck him if he had not backed off."

"I saw you were excited. Brute force is not the thing with which to meet such a fellow as that. The law must handle him," was the young physician's reply.

"Look here, Lynne. How is it that you always manage to keep cool? I am a Christian—at least I believe I am—and I know it is wrong to yield to my hot temper. Yet I am always having a fight to keep it under."

Ned's eyes sought those of his friend with deep earnestness as he thus spoke.

A stupor now seemed to be coming over Dick. It was with some difficulty that they could get him along. They halted a moment to get a better grasp on him, and Dr. Traver said, "My temper never has been so unmanageable as yours, Ned. Yet it was troublesome enough until I learned a secret. I got it out of the Book of books, and since I mastered it, I have

been a free man. Some day I will tell you all about it. Just now this poor boy needs all my attention." He glanced sharply at the number on a door they were passing, and then added, "His home is just here. He has recently recovered from a spell of fever. I suppose he spent his first earnings in that saloon to-night. There is danger of a relapse. If you will help me get him to his room, I will stay with him for an hour or so. He needs attention."

"But how about our call?" Ned questioned.

"That can wait, so far as mine is concerned. You can go alone. Make some excuse for me. Perhaps I can get off from Dick in time to meet you before you leave."

A few minutes later saw the young business man walking briskly down the street, and the physician sitting quietly by the drunken youth's side counting his pulse.

"Poor fellow. I am afraid he is going to have a hard time," he murmured, with a glance around the bare and comfortless room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAW ENFORCED.

DICK DONELSON did, in truth, have a hard time. His fever returned, and the last attack was more malignant than the first. For a week he grew steadily worse.

Dr. Traver did all that was possible for him. The sick youth never fully recovered from the stupor into which the whiskey he had imbibed threw him.

"Dick is bound to go over the line to-night unless God uses a miracle to save him," the doctor remarked gloomily to Ned Hunter. The two had met on the street as the latter was on his way from business. Dr. Traver turned and walked with him a few blocks.

"Pity. But he is only one of hundreds of such cases. Killed by drink. If he could not be saved from the habit, best for him to go now. That is my doctrine."

"But his soul. Think of that. And he has fine points." The young physician was depressed. His friend replied, "It is bad. But

why take it to heart? O'Ryan is his murderer. I would like to see that man in the chain-gang. He is a desperate character. Better be careful how you try to get the law hold of him. He never forgives a fancied injury. I was telling Ross about him to-day, and of our little encounter. He counselled me to insist that you let the fellow absolutely alone."

Dr. Traver raised his head with a motion peculiar to him when indignant.

"And you would become the bearer of the message, Ned? Is O'Ryan to be left alone to go on murdering other boys as he has murdered Dick Donelson? I am glad to say that I am not afraid of him. But I do fear to be guilty of cowardice in dealing with such a brute."

Ned was silent. The doctor added, after a moment's interval, "This affair has strengthened my resolve in two directions. One is, to fight the saloon to the death. The other, to give myself more fully to the work of the Y. M. C. A."

"God helping me, I will stand by you in both. I voiced Ross Rivers' thought because I feared for you, Lynne. But I now see how contemptible it was in me."

The doctor flashed a smile into his friend's face as he said, "The Y. M. C. A. must be made

more largely a rescue work. We are only playing at it now. From this hour I pledge myself, before God, to become a fisherman in earnest. The fish are plenty, if only we have our nets ready and our hooks baited right."

"'I will make you fishers of men'," Ned quoted in a musing tone. "Yes, it sometimes seems to me, as you say, we are only playing at religion all along the line."

"Last night, at Dick's bedside, I had a pretty solemn time. I saw there was no hope for him, and it almost seemed that his blood was on my garments. I should have used my influence over him to better purpose. I might have won him to cleaner associations, had I taken the trouble, before he went back to the saloon. I solaced myself by giving advice. Now it is too late to help him."

The physician's tone was almost bitter.

"Well, who among us is not guilty along these lines? If poor Dick's death will wake us up and set us about the King's business in earnest, he will not have lived in vain. Come in, won't you, and have dinner?"

They had paused in front of a handsome residence. Ned's home was with his cousin, Mr. John Walton, who was one of the wealthiest men in Portland.

"No—thanks. I must go on. I am glad I met you, though. I am cheered by your last remark. Good-night."

Dick Donelson died the next day without rousing from his stupor.

Dr. Traver only needed this death to make his action against O'Ryan a strong one.

He proved before the court that whiskey had been sold the youth again and again. He also testified that Dick's death was due to liquor imbibed when he was not fully recovered from fever.

O'Ryan fought savagely, and called many witnesses to disprove Dr. Traver's indictments; but the proof of his guilt was overwhelming, and a heavy fine was laid upon him, with three months in jail. While the sentence was a light one, considering the crime, it was the best that could be obtained.

The glare of hatred which O'Ryan threw toward Dr. Traver as the former was led from the court-room was something to make a timid heart quail.

"If that fellow lives to get free, you must watch out, Lynne," young Hunter remarked to his friend, as his eyes followed the burly figure out of sight. "You will certainly be in danger."

"My Captain will take care of the danger and

of his soldier as well," was Dr. Traver's reply. "I have only done my duty the best I knew how. If the man has learned his lesson, then some poor fellow, I hope, will be saved Dick Donelson's fate. This case has attracted a great deal of attention. Other saloon-keepers will be a little more careful how they defy the law in selling intoxicants to minors."

"It will take more than this one case to teach them their lesson," was Ned's response. "If the Christian men of this city would come to the front and see that the laws were properly enforced, things would soon be in a different shape from what they now are. But I suppose the most of them stand where I did before your words shamed me into joining you."

Dr. Traver smiled, but made no reply. His friend continued, as they together wended their way toward the physician's office, "Cousin John is tremendously pleased by your bold action. Says you are the kind of young man he has been looking for. You know he is one who fears neither men nor devils, and he is as bitter against the saloons as Neal Dow himself.

The next week brought Dr. Traver a formal invitation to dine with the Waltons. The home circle was a charming one, and the doctor was always pleased to be in their midst. Mrs. Wal-

ton was dead. Her sister, Mrs. Rivers, was at the head of the household. The son and daughter of this lady, Ross and Marcia Rivers, were also among the members of the family circle, and as these two young people were both merry and cultured, Mr. Walton's house was a very popular one. Ned Hunter often remarked to his friend that his cousin Marcia was one of the most charming girls he knew. This young lady had early evinced a strong friendship for Dr. Traver. This fact frequently won for her the laughing sallies of her friends.

The doctor's success in closing O'Ryan's saloon and placing the man within the strong grip of the law, had transformed the young physician into quite a hero, in Miss Rivers' estimation.

Her attentions, therefore, were most flattering, and as she was both pretty and piquant, it is not strange that the genial doctor found himself in his most pleasing and affable mood before the dinner ended.

Ross Rivers was a careless worlding. He was several years the senior of his sister. He admired the young physician, yet seemed ever ready to criticise him. Dr. Traver's modest, yet unequivocal, position as a Christian may have been the cause of this criticism.

After the doctor had taken his departure,

and Ned had also bidden the household good-night and retired to his room, Ross remarked to his sister, "Dr. Traver is too bright a fellow to be tied up in the church. Can't you use your influence to get him out?"

Marcia opened her eyes to their fullest extent in her surprise at this question.

"You seem to forget that I am a Christian as well as Dr. Traver," she remarked with dignity.

Her brother laughed a little sadly. "Your Christianity hasn't gone deep enough to hurt you. I thought it had when you first promised to 'renounce the world with its vain pomp and show'; but I feel differently about you of late. Dr. Traver bothers me. I look upon religion as a delusion. He gives me an uncomfortable feeling sometimes, that I may be mistaken."

These remarks set Marcia to pondering. But she was of too light a nature to be long impressed, and it was not many days until she was as gay and volatile as ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

ABOVE THE TIMBER LINE.

A GLANCE at our friends on Mount Tacoma reveals them to be in good health and still carrying light hearts. Jackson's intrepid spirit enabled him to meet every danger and discouragement with a smile, and two of his companions were hourly proving that they were worthy to share his exploits.

As the weather, in the main, continued favorable, they constantly made wide excursions from the point where they had encamped.

They first made themselves as comfortable as possible by building a fire-place out of lava chips. They also placed juniper boughs under their blankets for couches. Stunted specimens of the fir partially protected them from the wind, but as they continually made excursions above the level of the tent, they daily reached an altitude far beyond the timber line.

"Well, I have long heard of Mount Tacoma," Gordon one day remarked, after he and Stuart had spent some hours in studying the grandeur

about them. "I believe it is true that the wonderful system of glaciers found here is the grandest on the globe. In my travels I surely have never seen them equalled."

"You mean, never seen them equalled as exhibited in a single mountain, do you not?"

"Exactly. Hark! Hear that thundering crash. Another avalanche."

"I do not covet a position in its track," Stuart rejoined, with a smile. "Notice that beetling projection up yonder. It looks as though it might be rent off at any moment."

Even as they gazed, a huge mass of rocks went crashing down, carrying destruction to everything in its path. Gordon gave a slight shiver as he said, "How thickly dangers crowd us, yet how insensible we are. The awful grandeur and solitude about us impress me most solemnly. I somehow feel that I am just on the brink of the eternal world. And it makes me wish I were more fit for its glory."

"Is it not restful to know that there is One ever near us only waiting for our upward glance of need and trust to make us fit for all the glory he waits to give?" was Stuart's quick response.

"Look here, Holcombe, you are the first fellow I ever met that made religion attractive.



SCENE NEAR "TIMBER LINE," ON NORTH SIDE OF MOUNT TACOMA,
ABOUT SIX THOUSAND FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL.

Is Christ really the living Presence of Love to you which your words imply?"

A sudden radiance shone on Stuart Holcombe's face, and his voice, when he spoke, held a tone that went straight to his listener's heart.

"No words of mine can convey to you, Gordon, what he is to me. Never was his glorious presence more real, nor his love more manifest to the fishermen on the shores of Galilee, than to me at this moment. And this blessed Companionship, this uplifting Power, is for you as much as for me."

"For me, Holcombe? You do not know what my life has been, or you would not say that. Stained with sin from boyhood."

"Yes I would; I do. One throb of genuine repentance, one glance of faith into his loving, compassionate face, rolls all guilt away. When once you have seen him in his purity and beauty—yes, and in his agony on Calvary borne for you, such a loathing for sin will possess you that you would rather lose your right arm than grieve him by again harboring it in your heart or life."

The young man's impressive words brought a mist into his companion's eyes. He turned away and muttered, "I might loathe it, but I have no power to break from it."

"When once you know him, he gives you the power. Indeed, he himself, the living Christ, enters your soul and becomes the power that moulds and shapes your life," was Stuart's earnest response.

"I wish from my soul that I could see it as you do. Come; let us go out on yonder point. I see some boulders that appear to be loose. What sport it would be to roll them down the cliff," and Gordon walked away, his mood apparently changing to the rollicking glee of boyhood.

Stuart humored him, and soon they were prizing great boulders over the steep incline and watching them strike the glacier five hundred feet below. If the sport was undignified, it was also fascinating.

"There, that is the last one I am going to send over," Stuart said, as an immense fellow went crashing down. "I want to go up still higher before we turn back to camp."

"All right. That suits me to a dot. Let us go where we can get a better view of yonder cataract of ice."

After some steep and hazardous climbing they reached the coveted point.

"The cataract was formed by those granite dykes crossing the glacier's flow just there,"

Stuart remarked, after he had made a thoughtful survey of the massive cascade. "Notice how the breast of the glacier is torn, down far below where the cataract ends. Then see how it again becomes smooth as the force of the projecting dykes is lost in the mighty current."

"How it tells us the story of the past. Its speech is as plain as though uttered in words," was Gordon's answer, as his eyes roved up and down the glittering span on which the sunshine rested in dazzling glory. Stuart began to quote, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.' "

"That is wonderfully impressive, heard just here," Gordon remarked. "Which psalm is it?"

"A part of the nineteenth. Have you ever noticed the grandeur of the eighteenth? The first of it would make a fine study up here in the face of a coming storm."

"I do not recall it. But the sun warns us

that it is high time we were getting back to camp."

When they at length reached the tent it was almost dark. They were much surprised to find that Jackson and Miller were still absent.

"I will make the fire, and you can get water. By that time they will have come," Gordon said.

But when these preparatory steps toward supper were taken, the absent ones had not put in an appearance.

"It is now too dark for them to climb down in safety," Gordon remarked. An uneasy feeling was tugging at his heart.

Stuart now set about in earnest getting the evening meal. When it was ready there were but two to partake of it.

"Well, Jackson has let night overtake him too far up to get back before morning," was Stuart's conclusion.

"We might as well eat and turn in," he added. "It would be reckless for them to try to get back now, and equally so for us to try to find them. Nothing can be done before daylight."

"Suppose a storm should come," Gordon answered. "I declare, their continued absence is a serious matter. But it is true that we must

wait for day-light before we can go on a search."

Neither one slept very soundly that night. Visions of danger and disaster for their comrades haunted their slumbers, although Stuart at last succeeded in rolling his burden upon One who has told us to "cast all our burden upon him, for he careth for us."

CHAPTER XV.

A HASTY SLIDE.

GORDON opened his eyes as the first hint of day pencilled the eastern sky with light. He aroused Stuart, and, after partaking of a hasty breakfast, they started in the direction which they believed their comrades had taken.

"Jackson spoke of wishing to make some observations from a certain point. It was west of the route we took. I have a pretty clear idea of where it is," Stuart remarked, as he led the way. "Hal said they could get a fine view of the head of the glacier from where they were going."

"Then I can guess about where they are, or were. No one can tell where they may now be, with these awful crevasses yawning about us. Miller is a poor climber, and Jackson would never leave him in the lurch," Gordon rejoined, as he picked his way slowly behind his companion.

"I see you have brought a coil of rope from the pack," he continued. "That was a good

idea, for it is quite probable we shall find them down some steep divide, where they have slid-
den, and then could not get back. Jackson is
very daring when his motive is strong enough."

Their anxiety did not render them insensible to the glories about them. The beams of the rising sun lit up the ice fields and snow spans to such dazzling brilliancy that Gordon complained of his eyes, and wished he had brought goggles.

"Just look below us," Stuart exclaimed, pausing to take breath and pointing toward the base of the mountain.

A great mass of clouds had formed beneath them. It had the appearance of a wide, foaming sea, extending from the Olympic mountains and covering the entire Cascade range, with the exception of the highest peaks.

"If one wishes to find how utterly barren our language is, let him stand on Mount Tacoma at sunrise," was Gordon's rejoinder.

"Or at noontide, or at sunset," Stuart added. "I am not yet able to decide which hour is best for the views. One will bring out certain points better, but the next will unfold such marvels of beauty that I wonder I considered the other at all."

After drinking in the subtle charm of the

ever-changing panorama about them for a few moments, they continued their course, Stuart still leading the way.

Suddenly he paused and sent forth a ringing call. Gordon did likewise, and the mountains echoed and re-echoed with the sound.

"The echoes are so loud we should hardly hear Jackson if he replied," Gordon remarked.

Every few rods they continued to send out far-reaching halloos, and at last Stuart exclaimed, "It seems to me I heard an answer. Now listen carefully when I call."

Gordon did so, and also thought he heard a faint reply. He said, "It may only be the echoes; but let us push on. It came from below rather than above us, I thought."

After a time both were convinced that they really did receive an answer when they called.

Soon they were able to locate the sound. After some delay they paused on the edge of a deep crevasse and peered down. Then they called.

"We're here, all right. And likely to remain here unless you can fish us out," Jackson's cheery voice responded.

They could not see him, but this was explained by the fact that a narrow ledge overhung the spot from whence his voice proceeded.

"Are either of you hurt?" Gordon enquired.

"Not to speak of. I have a few bruises, and Jackson's wrist is sprained; but these won't count if only you can get us out of this beastly hole," came the response in Hallock Miller's well-known voice.

"We brought a rope with us. Now watch as it swings over the edge," Stuart said, as he proceeded to let it down. He had fastened a small weight to it, and soon it struck the shelf. He swung it off, and heard Jackson say, "I've got it. Wait a bit until we climb on the ledge. It will only take a moment or two."

There was silence for some moments. Then he called, "Brace yourselves and pull steadily. I have put it under Miller's arms. He is badly bruised. Try and not let him strike the sides as you pull him up."

In a few moments he was standing beside them, pale and dishevelled, but smiling with relief that he was out of the "trap," as he called the place where they had passed the night.

It did not take long to again lower the rope and bring Jackson up. He came with his arms laden, for nothing but the uttermost extremity would have induced him to lose one particle of the fruits of his hazardous journey up the mountain.

"Now tell us how you came to select that place as a spot in which to pass the night," Gordon enquired, much relieved to find matters no worse than they were.

"Well, if I understand it, it selected me, not I it," was Miller's rueful answer. "At any rate, as I was cautiously walking along the edge of this crevasse a stone, imbedded in the snow, gave way. I slipped, grabbed at the edge, then slipped again, and kept on slipping 'till I landed on that shelf down there. I was somewhat bruised, but thought I could climb out."

"And a pretty mess he made of it, too, before he would give it up," Jackson struck in. "His hands were cut and bleeding before he would listen to my trying to go down a bit to try and swing the rope to him. I had only a short one, for the long rope was with Miller down in the crevasse. My idea was to get down far enough for him to reach the end of mine and tie it to his. Then I was going to climb to the top, make the thing fast, and haul him up. Well, the long and the short of it is, I went down a little way, slowly and cautiously. Then, all at once, I took a header. I can't bear to be a poke-about, so I just finished up in a hurry."

He paused to laugh, then added, "We were in for the night, as we both knew. We thought

you would hunt us up this morning. We crawled down around the ledge and spent the night under its shelter. Miller is stiff and pretty well battered, but I am good for another tramp to-day after I have had some breakfast."

"Weren't you almost frozen before morning?" Gordon enquired, as they turned toward camp.

"I felt entirely so," Miller replied, in a grumbling tone; "but Jackson seemed to be made of India rubber. He badgered me half the night because I complained a little."

"Just look up there, boys, before we go on," Jackson suddenly said. "You'll never get a prettier view than that."

They all looked in the direction indicated. It was indeed a magnificent view of the head of the glacier, some three thousand feet above them. They saw that it was fed directly from the snow cap of the mountain, and while they were gazing a great mass of snow fell from its proud position, like a cloud of heavy vapor, down the steep face of the mountain upon the glacier.

"That is certainly a splendid sight, but I hope I will not be considered lacking in taste when I admit that I do not care for a closer view," Gordon remarked, with a shrug of his shapely shoulders.

"Well, I have had enough of this mountain,

now and forever," Miller said, as they again turned in the direction of the camp. "I move that we begin our descent to-day. Jackson has got all he came for, and a nasty storm may yet catch us if we stay longer."

The others agreed to this proposition, for they saw that he was not in condition to endure further hardship. The task of getting home was quite enough to tax him to his uttermost.

"If I hadn't sworn off I would have brought a flask of brandy along. I would give a ten dollar bill for a stiff cocktail this morning," he remarked, still in the grumbling tone habitual to him when things did not go to his mind.

Jackson, who was in advance, halted abruptly and looked him keenly in the eye as he said, "What a fool whiskey does make of a man! Don't you know it is because you have wrecked your nerves and impaired your strength by using it for so long that puts you in the plight in which you find yourself this morning? Why, if you had been a tee-totaller like Holcombe and myself, you wouldn't go slipping down crevasses like you do. Nor would the exposure of last night tell on you any more than it tells on me."

Miller's face flushed, but he made no reply. Jackson hastened to add, as he again went on his way, "I am talking pretty straight, Miller,

but I am a blunt fellow. And it riles me to hear you wish for the worst thing you could possibly have. If I hadn't known you were freed from your cups, I would never have consented to your coming up here. Don't you ever touch another drop of the infernal stuff, no matter what the temptation may be."

"Didn't I say I had sworn off?" Miller replied. Then he added, with some heat, "But there are times when a glass of whiskey means renewed life and strength. It would mean that to me this morning."

Jackson's lip curled, but he made no response. Evidently he was no friend to intoxicants.

CHAPTER XVI.

"TO THE RESCUE."

FOR two days Fielding and his companions had enjoyed royal sport with their guns.

Oscar proved too timid to be relied upon when there was the slightest hint of danger, but Edgar soon found that Clam possessed all the needed qualities to make a bold hunter. He was cool and quiet; daring without being reckless, and rarely missed his mark.

As Oscar had often boasted of brave deeds before this hour of testing came, Fielding was rather disgusted with his evident lack of courage.

Even yet, when around the camp-fire at night, he would tell of moments of thrilling danger in which he had acted a hero's part. But Edgar now received such narrations with a curling lip. Even Clam, who was noticeably fond of Oscar, would smile in an amused way whenever the former launched into his favorite theme. This theme was to recount some daring exploit in which he, Oscar Henderson, only

son and heir of the brilliant jurist, Lawyer Henderson, was always the central figure.

"Hark! What is that?" Fielding suddenly exclaimed one afternoon, as they were wending their way toward camp.

"It's the grunt of wild hogs," Clam quickly rejoined. "There must be a drove of them feeding over in the thicket yonder."

"What fun it would be to shoot one," Oscar said, his eyes sparkling. "We have brought down a deer and sighted a bear besides getting these birds. Let us try our hand on a wild hog. Porksteak for supper would be fine."

"All right. It is good sport if you don't encounter the tusks of one of the old boars. If you do, the sport for you suddenly ends," was Clam's reply. As he spoke he turned his face toward the thicket whence the noise which had attracted Fielding's attention proceeded.

"You and Oscar can take a pop at them if you like. I am not fond of pork, so I will go on to camp," was Edgar's reply. They had pitched their tent in a sheltered spot not far from the Carbon river, and returned to it every night. Edgar hoped by remaining in this vicinity to encounter the others on their homeward route from the mountain if their trip was not too prolonged.

He now went on, telling Oscar not to stay out long, and added, with a laughing glance at Clam, "If one of those boars grows so attentive that you are forced to bring him to reason with a shot, just save me a tusk, will you? It will be a pleasant souvenir when you are telling of your exploits, and I can show the tusk as a voucher for your story."

"All right," was Oscar's response, not seeing the sarcasm in the words. "I'll bring you more than the tusks, though, for I am hungry for pork. Venison is too dry."

With a word of caution from Clam the two stole noiselessly up to the thicket. Peering through the brush they saw several hogs busily engaged in feeding on acorns. Four or five were fine shoats.

"Aim at the speckled one. I will take the black," Clam whispered.

A moment later two shots entered the drove, each one doing execution.

Clam's victim rolled over with scarcely a grunt, shot through the brain. But Oscar was not so fortunate in his aim. The speckled pig was wounded, but was able to emit blood-curdling squeals. Had Oscar kept quiet, all might have ended well, for the shoat soon fell over dead. But, in his excitement, the boy

rushed into full view of the drove, crying, "I must give him another dose to settle him."

But he didn't.

The father of the shoats, a big, fierce boar, seeing that one of his offspring was in trouble, was running about him emitting short, angry grunts.

As his ugly little eyes rested on Oscar's exposed figure, he felt that here was the author of the mischief to his family.

With a fierce grunt he came tearing through the brush, intent on wiping out his wrongs.

"Fire at him. Quick!" Clam cried, as he noted Oscar's inert figure and the boar's rapid approach.

Vain command! Oscar, with a cry, dropped his gun and fled. Clam saw, however, that the enraged animal would soon overtake him. He stepped swiftly forward, but dared not fire, for he was just in line with Oscar's retreating figure. If his shot missed the boar, it might strike the boy.

Quick as thought he stooped, picked up a stone and sent it hurtling through the air, at the same time giving a loud cry. The rock struck where he had intended, and the boar halted a moment in his wild chase. Clam then emitted a few swine-like squeals, took a few swift steps forward, and raised his gun.

The boar behaved exactly as he had expected. His attention had been diverted from Oscar, and his brutish rage was transferred to Clam.

The boy waited until the animal was near enough to make him sure of not missing his aim. Then he fired.

The boar dropped in his tracks, not four yards distant from his slayer.

"If I had missed him, it would have been rather unpleasant for me," he mused, as he bent over to see that the fierce fellow was really dead.

Looking into his face at that moment with the light of triumph upon it, one saw what a remarkably handsome boy he was. Not soft featured, but with a strong beauty that bespoke a manly and noble soul.

"Come back. The old fellow is dead," he cheerily called. But Oscar did not pause in his flight until he reached the tent.

Then, breathless and hatless, he sank down exhausted.

CHAPTER XVII.

PLEASANT HOURS.

“GOOD-BYE. I’ll be back by sunset.”

It was Florence Fielding who spoke. She blew a kiss from her finger tips to her mother, who stood upon the piazza steps watching her merry lassie ride away in the glow of the morning sunshine.

“A sweeter or bonnier lass never lived,” was the thought of Mrs. Fielding’s heart as she went in-doors.

Florence was going to spend the day in town with Helen Holcombe. Although there was a gap of four years in their ages, Helen had long held Florence as a cherished friend and companion.

During the latter’s absence in college and later, while passing the summer with relatives in the East, a constant correspondence had been kept up between them. This was the first time since her return that Floy had taken time from her mother to visit her friend.

A very striking picture she made in her handsome habit, which fitted her well-rounded

figure as a glove fits the hand. Her hair, which, in spite of comb and pins would escape here and there into rings and loosely-curling tendrils, was worn low on her head in a heavy braid. Her cheeks were like roses, and her eyes held a sparkle, from which it were well for susceptible youths to keep their distance. For this "rare and radiant maiden" laughed at love and lovers, and announced it as her firm intention always to lead a single life.

Helen received her with all the warmth of affection which the girl's intense nature craved from all those whom she loved, and the two were soon lost to all thoughts of the outer world in happy converse.

"Is it not strange the boys do not return?" Florence at length said.

"The boys" had reference to the hunting party. Each had a brother among the campers-out.

"Stuart hoped they would be gone a week. It is now eight days since they left. I am glad they are staying so long, for he sadly needed the change. He was looking wretchedly. I felt quite anxious about him," was Helen's reply.

Florence broke into one of her merry peals of laughter, and then caught her friend about the waist and waltzed her down the broad hall as

she, said, "I see you are the same foolish girl I left behind me two years ago! I remember you were always afraid lest that sweet little brother of yours should fall and bruise his knee; or climb on a stool, catch a tumble, and hurt his precious head," and again the rippling laughter rang out.

Then, with a sudden change of mood habitual to her, she added, "Does it not seem strange that I have never met this paragon of a brother? I am sure I shall not like him. He is too perfect. But I have a great curiosity to see him."

At this juncture Sarah Grant admitted a young gentleman into the room. As there had been no announcement of his arrival, Florence made a grimace as she saw him enter. A glance into his face, however, dissipated her momentary annoyance.

He was a curly-headed youth of five summers, whom Helen greeted with much warmth and introduced as "Master Freddie Stokes, my little friend from across the street."

"I am always glad to meet manly, well-behaved, pretty young gentlemen," Florence graciously remarked, captivated by his smile and his bright eyes.

"You is pretty, too," he responded, after he had surveyed her critically. "Prettier'n her,"

pointing to Helen, "'cause your hair curls just like a boy. I say, what makes some short and some long? My hair's all short."

"Oh! a naughty girl got some scissors one day when I was off at school away from my mamma and cut off a part of mine. Isn't it a pity she didn't cut it all? Then I might have looked like a boy, just like you," was Floy's unsmiling answer. But her eyes were dancing with merriment.

"I likes you bestest like you is. Girls are prettier'n boys. But boys is smartest, papa says. What makes your cheeks redder'n hern?" and he flashed another glance toward Helen.

"Because I live out of doors and get plenty of oxygen. She starves herself staying in the house," was Floy's quick response.

"Pooh! Ox-gen's what oxens eats. I know, 'cause my papa keeps oxens. What you want to eat that for?"

"Well, if oxygen is what oxen eat, can you tell me what nitrogen is?" was Floy's counter query. "You see I am only a girl, and not a very wise one, either."

Freddie knitted his brows thoughtfully. After pondering a moment he said, "'Cose ni'tagen's what the oxens eats at night. I mos' thinks so. But I'll ask papa 'bout it. Does you

eat that, too? Oxens just eats it, I 'spose, 'cause they can't get the other stuff you talked 'bout, nur hay. It's dark, you see, an' they can't hunt roun' fur nothin'. What else do you eat?"

"Oh! lots of things, you dear, quaint boy," was Floy's answer. She caught the little fellow's hands in a warm clasp, and added, "Do you know how to measure ribbon as the French measure it?"

Freddie shook his head.

"No? Well, this is the way," and she rapidly and merrily measured off several yards, much to Freddie's satisfaction.

As her lips met his on the fourth yard, she paused and asked, "How do you like it? Is it better than our way of measuring?"

"Yes, with you," was his naive reply. "But I guess I wouldn't like it much with some folks. Who showed you how to do it?"

"Oh! I couldn't tell you that. Some one I liked, though, ever so much long ago."

Helen made a pleasing picture as she sat in a low rocker smiling at Freddie as he yielded himself a willing captive to Floy's enticements. The boy was a great favorite with her, and passed almost as much time in the Holcombe home as in his own.

"Helen, how long have you known Mr. Sid-

ney Gordon?" Florence suddenly asked, seeming to forget for the moment all about the child.

"Only a short time. Why do you ask?" Helen answered, evidently surprised at the question.

"What is he doing in Tacoma?" the girl continued, not heeding her friend's inquiry.

"Having a good time, I think. I did not know you had met him." Helen's eyes rested thoughtfully on Floy's face as she thus spoke.

"Indeed I have. And I think he is the handsomest man I ever saw. And I like him. Oh! I like him ever so much."

The girl's eyes were brilliant as she thus spoke, and the color on her cheeks deepened.

A little shadow flitted over Helen Holcombe's face. Before Floy could ask the reason Freddie suddenly spoke, "Was it him that showed you how to measure the ribbon with kisses?"

A rosy flush for a moment bathed the girl's face from forehead to chin. As Helen noted this the shadow in her eyes deepened. Nor was it dissipated by Floy's ringing laugh, nor by her evident amusement over the boy's question.

"No indeed," she answered, merrily. Then she added, more soberly, "Where did you learn, Freddie, to ask such pointed questions?"

The child looked puzzled. He glanced down

at his feet as he answered, "I wear pointed shoes, but I never saw any pointed questions. I guess I don't know what you mean."

"No, I guess you don't. Never mind. Come here and sit on this stool by me, and I will sing for you."

But the child backed slowly away from her outstretched hand, saying, "No, I don't like sings. Mamma has 'em, an' she makes me sit so still I mos' rather go to bed. I'm goin' to see Sarah Grant. She'll give me a cookey if I ask her."

He went quickly out of the room, seemingly afraid to remain longer lest he should be forced to listen to "the sings."

"He is the cutest child I ever saw," Floy exclaimed, with an amused smile. Then she suddenly asked, turning to Helen, "Why so sober, *mon chere*?"

"Am I sober? Well, I am two years older than when you last saw me; and I feel ten. I am glad you are back again. Perhaps your merry ways will make me merry, too."

For the first time Florence seemed to notice that her friend was changed. She laid her hand caressingly on Helen's, but did not speak for some moments. Her heart was saying, "I wonder what it is! I am afraid she did care for

that Dr. Traver, after all. I thought so at the time. And he has never been back to visit her during the two years I have been away. I don't see how any man could know Helen as well as he seemed to know her without loving her."

When she did at length speak, her words in no wise betrayed the tenor of her thoughts.

"You are to come out to the ranch and spend a whole week with me soon; before the weather turns cold. I have got a plan arranged for every day brim-full of fun and pleasure."

Helen smiled, and Floy fell to discussing some of her plans with much enthusiasm.

The day was gone before either friend was ready to welcome the shades of evening.

As Floy rode gaily home in the glow of the sunset she musingly questioned, "Why did Helen look so sober when I asked her about Mr. Gordon? I meant to have found out, but forgot."

It was some time before this query was answered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON PUGET SOUND.

IN the favored State where our story is located the climate is usually so equable that, without a calendar to keep bearings, one would hardly appreciate the changes of the seasons.

Summer merges so gradually into autumn, and autumn glides so quietly into the domain of winter, that a stranger is often surprised when a sudden flurry of snow, or a chilling blast, usually as brief as unexpected, reminds him that, in less favored climes, ice and snow are holding high carnival.

On the larger ranches cattle and sheep are often left out the entire year. They find shelter from the infrequent storms under the high, tent-like cedars, and forage in the protected spots for the grass which the heavy timber protects sufficiently to afford food to satisfy their needs.

When the hunting party had been out for

ten days, with no hint of their returning, Florence Fielding poutingly said to her father, "I haven't had a sail in the 'Water Witch' since I came home. She is just lovely in her new dress, and I am tired of waiting for Edgar to come. Can't I go alone, papa?"

Mr. Fielding shook his head.

"Then won't you come with me?"

"That is impossible, dear. Be patient and Edgar will soon be home."

"Very likely, when he comes, he will not want to go sailing. It is just according to the mood he is in whether he will go with me or not."

In this frame of mind Floy wandered down to the beach. Beautiful Puget Sound had never, to her partial eyes, looked so lovely as it did to-day, nor so enticing.

The sound of the lapping waves soon threw her into a happy day-dream. She seated herself on a crag by the beach, in full view of her cherished boat, and allowed her fancy to drift whither it would. After a time she opened a book she had brought with her, and was soon lost to her surroundings in its absorbing pages.

The sound of voices quite near at last aroused her. With a joyful cry she sprang to her feet. She recognized Edgar's tone. Yes, there he was, not ten yards away, with Oscar Henderson

and a youth whom Floy did not know. The latter proved to be Clam Jones.

When the greetings were over, Floy asked her brother, "Have you seen mother? She would not admit it, but I could see your prolonged absence troubled her."

Edgar laughed as he replied, "She isn't troubled now, except it be over the depleted condition of her larder. Jones here officiated as 'chef' for us while we were out, but his concoctions couldn't vie with mother's culinary productions. I ate the half of one of her big pies, and Oscar and Jones were only held back from doing likewise by feelings of delicacy."

"And so you have been home for ever so long and I never dreamed you had come. Mother knew where I was. Why didn't she call me?" Floy said, in a tone of chagrin.

"I wouldn't let her," was Edgar's reply. "I was in a hurry, for I must be in town by two o'clock. And I knew, when once you got started, there would be no getting away until you had heard all our adventures."

"So he brought me along to save him the trouble of airing them," Oscar volunteered. He and Floy were warm friends, being about the same age. They had been class-mates before Floy was sent to her aunt in the East to

attend college. Since her return Oscar had been out to the ranche almost every day until he went on the hunting trip.

Edgar smiled and eyed Oscar with amusement as he said, "Oscar was so afraid I would not tell you about his doughty deeds that he not only came to narrate them himself, but brought Jones along to help him."

Oscar laughed good-naturedly. He was too intimate at the ranche to mind the sting that sometimes lay behind Edgar's words.

"But I must be off," the latter said, looking at his watch.

Clam Jones moved as though to accompany him.

"No, Jones, you are to wait for me," Oscar declared. "I brought you along so that I would not have to poke into the city alone. Besides, you are to see my father to-night, you know, as we go in. And you must stay and see that I tell our adventures to Miss Fielding all right."

Floy now, for the first time, looked closely at the young stranger.

The impression she received was a most pleasing one. His clothing, though coarse, was neat. Indeed, his appearance was more tidy than Oscar's. The latter had waited until he could get to the city before he "brushed up."

Clam, knowing he was to meet strangers at the ranche, had carefully prepared himself for the call, in so far as his limited accommodations would permit.

And these accommodations had seemed more complete to Clam than to Oscar or to Edgar, for he was accustomed to roughing it. He had bathed and donned a fresh shirt in place of the sweater he had formerly worn. When rallied by Oscar as to how he had managed to carry an extra shirt along, and where he had hidden it, he only laughed. His home was so distasteful to him that he had hoped something might transpire that would keep him away for weeks or months. Hence, with his cooking outfit, he had stowed away a parcel containing what changes he might need should his stay be thus lengthened.

His locks were as smooth as their curling tendency would permit, and his face wore a happy expression which had not been noticeable when he started on the jaunts. This was due, in part, to the fact that Oscar had promised him the position of "office boy" in Lawyer Henderson's office, if said position had not been filled during Oscar's absence.

The lawyer's son had taken a strong fancy to Clam, and he believed it only needed his earnest

entreaties to secure his new friend the coveted place unless some applicant had gained it before he reached home.

Sitting on a crag, a favorite seat with Floy, Oscar launched into an account of the hunting trip, from time to time turning to Clam for endorsement of his statements.

All at once his eyes noted Floy's sailboat.

"If that isn't the 'Water Witch,' " he exclaimed. "I didn't know her in her fresh coat of paint. Isn't she a daisy, though? Have you been sailing since she was repaired?"

"No. I have just been pining for a sail, but papa would not let me go out in the boat alone. I meant to capture Edgar when he first got home; but—" She did not complete her sentence. The fact was, her brother had taken her by surprise, and the presence of Oscar and Clam had driven all thought of a sail from her mind.

Oscar sprang to his feet. "Let us go now. It will be a jolly close to our outing to end up with a sail in the 'Water Witch'."

Floy also arose, but glanced doubtfully skyward. Heavy clouds had arisen within the last hour, obscuring the sun.

"Those clouds look threatening," she began, but Oscar interrupted her.

"You are too good a sailor to care about clouds. And we could manage the boat if a little squall should come. Come on. Jones knows how to sail a boat. He shall be crew and I captain. You shall be queen, and have nothing to do but enjoy the sail."

He walked toward the water's edge. Floy's eyes again scanned the sky.

"Those clouds threaten wind," she said. "I want to go dreadfully, but I don't want to be foolish."

"Pshaw! You're not the girl you used to be if you are going to let a few clouds keep you from having a good time. I hope college hasn't spoiled you."

These words nettled Floy. She turned to Clam and said, "Do you know anything about boats? Oscar thinks himself a fine sailor; but unless he has changed, I would not care to depend on him in a storm."

Clam modestly answered, "I have been sailing a few times; but I know more about a gun than a sail boat."

"I have been on the water half my time almost since you have been mooning it off at college," Oscar exclaimed, loftily. Floy's words to Clam had pricked his vanity.

"I am going to have a sail, anyhow," he

added, with the freedom of old days, when he and Floy had been almost like brother and sister. As he spoke he ran to where a little row-boat was fastened. It was always kept close to the "Water Witch" when she was anchored off the wharf, to enable those wishing to use her to reach her. Oscar sprang in, and with a laughing glance toward Floy, rowed off. He looked so boyish in his golf suit that Floy could hardly believe he was not the same merry boy she had left behind her two years before instead of now being a young man of nineteen years.

He was soon on the deck of the sail-boat, and, adjusting the sails and loosening her from her moorings, she moved off gaily before the wind.

"Be careful. Don't go far," Floy called. "I can't trust you to manage her in this stiff breeze."

"I'll turn back now if you'll come with me and have a sail. I prefer to have you and Jones along, of course. I'm bound to have some fun, though."

Oscar was a spoiled only child, and Floy well knew his wilfulness. She gave another searching glance at the sky and then said, "Well, come back, and I'll go. But we will have merry times in keeping that boat straight in such a wind as this."

Oscar, after some difficulty, brought the boat to the wharf. Floy watched his movements with alert eyes.

"Can you swim?" she demurely asked Clam. "I know Oscar can, for we have been bathing in the Sound together too many times for me to doubt his accomplishment in that direction."

Clam said that he could, and flashed a glance at Oscar.

Soon the "Water Witch" was moving gaily and gracefully off before the wind. This boat had been given to Floy by her father on her fifteenth birthday. Old sailors, who at first shook their heads over a girl's learning to manage a boat, soon declared that "Purty Miss Fielding could sail a boat a'most as well as any sea cap'n, and was as plucky as a boy."

Oscar adjusted the sails and made himself captain, but Floy kept a wary eye upon his movements.

"Tack a little," she said, in a low tone. "You will strike that boat anchored there unless you are careful."

He did so, grumblingly.

"She thinks I don't know how to sail this boat," he complained to Clam.

The latter was silent. He was quietly noting how critically Floy's eyes were watching the

course of the boat, even though she was engaged in conversation at the time.

As they got out into deep water the wind grew stronger. Boats were moving shoreward, for the clouds were rapidly rising and spreading over the sky. Little white caps began to appear on the crest of the waves, and the "Water Witch" dipped almost to the water's edge under the wind and the pressure of her sails. Oscar began to glance furtively toward the sky. His spirits were evidently sinking, but Floy's were rising. They bowled merrily along, and from time to time Floy exclaimed, "Isn't this delightful." At last she added, "The 'Water Witch' is still the prettiest boat on the Sound."

CHAPTER XIX.

A BRAVE SAILOR.

THERE was a new ring in Floy's tone as she said, briskly, after they had been out some half hour, "We will steer for that grove on Vashon Island. There are some berries growing there that I wish to get. They are both pretty and rare."

Oscar prepared to change their course and trim the sails accordingly, but said before he did so, "If you want to turn back now, I'm willing. We've had a jolly sail, and that cloud begins to look black."

"No, we will get the berries first," Floy said, with an amused smile. "You are such an expert sailor you can manage the boat, you know, even if a little wind and rain should strike us."

She threw him a laughing glance, and then turned her gaze toward the island.

She had placed Clam at the tiller soon after they moved out from the wharf. She saw that he understood its management, and now gave her whole attention to Oscar. She knew his

weak points as well as his strong ones, and while she hoped he had gained in courage and manliness during their two years' separation, she did not feel confident that such was the case.

She had always been fond of him, for her mother and Mrs. Henderson were the closest of friends. This had thrown their children much together. But she also entertained a high-spirited girl's scorn for the timidity which seemed ingrained in his nature. This weakness in his character was greatly accentuated by his habit of boasting. While Floy had long known of these foibles, she had always stood his loyal friend, and had hidden the defects, as far as was possible, from the eyes of others. Hence it was that Edgar had never known Oscar's weak points until on the hunting trip.

As Floy now intently regarded him she was asking herself, "How much help would he really give me should the storm break? Is not the cowardice of his boyish days changing to the courage of true manhood?" This question received a speedy answer.

They sped along swiftly, the little boat riding the waves right gallantly. The water was now quite rough, and few boats were out. Those that still breasted the wind were much larger

and heavier than the "Water Witch," and even these were slowly moving in.

It is not always easy to get a sail-boat where you want it. But Floy's hand was now on the ropes, and her clear voice told the boys just what to do. They soon reached the island and Oscar sprang out. He secured several sprays of the coveted berries and presented them to Floy. The waves all about them now wore snowy caps, and were tossing wildly. Oscar looked at them and visibly weakened.

"I say, Floy, let's cast anchor over here until the shower is past. It's almost on us."

The girl's eyes sparkled.

"And stay here all night? That is no shower that is coming, but a fierce storm. No, we must go home as quickly as possible or mamma will be wild about me. Our only way is to get to the dock before the storm really breaks."

She glanced critically at the sky, now one mass of angry clouds, and also at the tossing billows. Then she looked at Oscar. His face was quite pale, and she saw that his chin quivered. Something like scorn flashed from her eyes as she turned them from his countenance to Clam's.

"Will you stand by me, and do just as I say?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I will," he answered, briefly. Floy was satisfied.

"You will please mind the tiller," was all she said to Oscar. "Keep the boat headed for the dock nearest home."

Just as they started the wind suddenly veered. "Quick! Pull that rope," she said to Clam. The sail was altered and the jib lowered.

"I'm so glad the wind has changed," she said. "It will help us over. We need not tack now unless it veers again."

It did in a few moments. It came in fitful gusts. The girl stood, with her hand on the ropes, and watched the varying mood of the storm with the eye of a sailor.

"We must take in more sail. Another blast is coming," she said, and Clam, who really knew more about boats than she thought, touched the right rope without another word.

"Just in time," she breathed, her color mounting. The next moment a heavy squall caused the boat to careen dangerously.

"Do sit down," said Clam. "It looks dangerous for you to stand."

Oscar urged the same thing. His face was now pallid.

"No, I cannot watch so well. We must take

no useless risk. The Sound is very rough, but I am used to it."

The spray dashed over them and wet them mercilessly; and then, with a fresh burst of fury, the rain came. The boat did well, but she was a frail thing to breast such a gale.

"The water is fully twenty feet deep here," Oscar remarked. "We ought to have staid on the island. If the boat goes over, we are lost."

"Nonsense!" Floy's voice sounded like a bugle. "She's not going over. And if she does, we can swim."

For a few moments the wind lulled. And then, in the west, the clouds suddenly parted. For a brief instant the sun shone out.

"How glorious!" burst from Floy's lips. Clam's eyes sparkled, but he did not speak. Oscar was also silent.

It was a moment never to be forgotten. The rain ceased, and a weird, dazzling light touched water and land and sky. Every white-capped billow caught a tint of glory from the angry crimson in the west. Then all again was wrapped in gloom.

"Another gale is coming," said Floy, hurriedly. "The sail must all be furled." She lowered it just as the wind struck them. Clam was by her side and grasped her arm, or she

must have gone over as the boat reeled. For a moment it seemed uncertain whether the "Water Witch" would stand the shock or not. She quivered like a thing possessed of life, and then careened dangerously. Clam and Floy crouched down upon their knees, and Oscar groaned. But she righted herself, and sped onward before the wind.

"We must give her a little sail," said Floy. She and Clam at once busied themselves taking a double reef in the main-sail and then hoisting it.

"Oscar, you are not minding the helm. Quick, or we shall miss the dock," cried Floy, seeing they were drifting out of their course.

"What's the use," stammered Oscar, his teeth chattering. "We—we're bound to go over."

Floy actually stamped her foot as she cried, "Don't be a baby, Oscar. Mind that tiller! See!" she added, joyously, "there's papa on the landing, and Captain Fisk, and a lot of others. Who can they be? Oh! I'm so proud of the 'Water Witch!' Almost any other boat would have been swamped."

But another ordeal was before them. A fiercer gust of wind than before caused the mast to creak ominously. Floy and Clam both sprang to lower the sail. Before this could be done the

mast snapped. It just missed Clam's head. It's weight nearly overturned the boat.

"Quick! We must pull it around, across the deck, or it will drag us over," he cried, springing forward.

"Yes, I will mind the tiller and let Oscar help you," responded Floy, suiting her action to the word. "He is stronger than I."

Oscar, seeing the dock and friends so near, aroused himself and worked with a will. It was not an easy thing to accomplish, but at last the mast was dragged on board, and the boat again righted herself. The next instant shouts of welcome were heard and the wharf was soon reached. Strong hands were ready to render assistance.

"You're a brave sailor, Miss Fielding," said burly Captain Fisk as he helped her father lift the girl to the platform. "I never saw a boat better handled. I had just got in with my fishing smack when I saw your little craft was out in the storm. To cross from Vashon Island in the teeth of a gale like this," he added, "and in such a boat as the 'Water Witch,' is about the neatest thing I ever saw done," and he gazed critically at the dismantled boat.

"The boys helped me," said Floy, modestly. She clasped both hands fondly through her fath-

er's arm, and flashed an amused glance at Oscar. His courage had risen as soon as his feet struck solid earth.

"It wasn't as bad as it looked," he said, with a smile. "If we had become frightened, we might have gone over. Courage is worth a great deal in times of real danger."

He held his head quite like a young admiral. Clam coughed behind his hand, and stole a glance at Floy.

"Yes, courage is worth a great deal at all times," was all she said; but something in her tone caused Oscar to wince. Then she turned her face to her father and asked, "Was mamma frightened about me?"

"She did not know you were on the water," he answered. "She fancies you are over with Nell Stokley. I am the only one who has suffered from your escapade. What induced you to go out in the face of such a storm?"

Floy laughed, patted his cheek, and asked, in a whisper, "Who is that gentleman talking with Oscar? And what are all those people doing on the wharf?"

Mr. Fielding stared.

"Why, that is Mr. Holcombe. Is it possible you have never met him? The others are a party Captain Fisk had out for a sail. They

have been watching the 'Water Witch' and her dauntless captain. Come. I know you don't mind being water-soaked, but I confess I've had enough of it. Mr. Holcombe is going to the house with us. He came out to see me on business. I'll introduce you as we go along."

The next moment, drenched, dishevelled, but charming, Floy was smiling in Stuart's Holcombe's face and listening to him as he said, "I feel that I already know you, Miss Fielding, through Helen."

So this was the brother whose praises her friend had been sounding so long.

"He is not half so handsome as Mr. Gordon," she decided, a moment later, as they all turned from the wharf. But she frankly admitted to herself before she reached the shelter of the house the following fact: "But his face is stronger—yes—and nobler. And I don't like him for it, either. Mr. Gordon is my ideal of a perfect man."

These thoughts caused her to change from the merry, sparkling mood in which she had met the young lawyer, to one of sudden dignity and reserve. Had this swift transformation been a ruse to further enhance her charms in Stuart Holcombe's eyes, she could not have planned more successfully.

He had greatly admired her spirit when he saw the courage with which she commanded the "Water Witch;" but he was not prepared to find her so exactly filling his ideal of the girl he had often pictured to himself as capturing his heart, as she proved to be before the evening closed.

He left the ranche with a glow in his heart which had never before warmed it. Once, some years before, he had fancied himself in love with a pretty, frivolous girl whom he afterwards knew had never really touched his deeper nature. Thereafter he had rather shunned the society of young ladies until Helen's girlfriends had laughingly named him "The Bachelor."

The storm which had fallen so fiercely over the Sound and its vicinity, rolled away before the end of the evening. It was bright starlight when the young lawyer rode cityward.

"Well, I cannot at all see that I have obtained the information that Mr. Henderson wanted," he mused, with a smile; "but I have certainly met the loveliest girl in the State of Washington. I do not wonder Helen loves her."

With this significant remark he urged his horse into a gallop, and did not slacken speed until he reached his own door.

CHAPTER XX.

DESCENDING THE MOUNTAIN.

GOING back some hours, we will again glance at our friends on Mount Tacoma. Hallock Miller proved to be in worse plight than Jackson knew.

Holcombe, who had known him from boyhood, undertook the difficult task of seeing him reach the foot of the mountain in safety.

"It would about kill his mother should anything happen to Hal," he remarked to Gordon. The latter was urging Stuart not to endanger his own life to succor his friend.

"He is not so bad off as he thinks," Gordon said. "He is in a beastly temper, and wants whiskey. A little slide down a divide would bring him to his senses."

"Rather a dangerous way to accomplish it," was Stuart's reply. "No, I am an old friend of Hal's, and I shall stick to him. There is more hope for him now than there has been since he was a boy. He is in love, and this seems to be making a man of him. At one time he promised well. Whiskey and bad associates have almost

ruined him; but I still hope to see him develop into the man I used to think he would make when we were boys together."

The weather continued calm, but the cold steadily increased. The descent was made along a different route from the one chosen in coming up. Jackson was fairly familiar with this one, and knew the points where extreme caution was needed to ensure safety.

Miller seemed so prone to stumble that Stuart at length devised a plan whereby his danger of falling into one of the many yawning crevasses, which continually met them, was greatly lessened. This was effected by lashing himself to Hallock by means of a stout rope, giving a play of some feet to the rope.

"A good idea," was Gordon's comment. "That is the way parties lash themselves together when climbing the Alps. Sometimes as many as five or six will be thus connected."

Jackson frowned as he said, "That is a different thing from this that Holcombe has done. Where there are a number of careful climbers, each adds to the safety of the others. Here there is only one man to brace himself against the blunders of the other. If Miller would only rouse himself he would not slip so constantly."

Hallock muttered something that sounded like

an oath. The cheery manliness which had marked his ascent had wholly vanished under the hardships encountered on the mountain.

At the first convenient point Stuart insisted on stopping. He borrowed Jackson's spirit-lamp and made some strong, black coffee. This Miller eagerly drank. The others also tried it, but found it too bitter to be palatable.

The powerful stimulant acted like a charm on Miller.

"Why didn't you think of it before," he asked. "Jackson has been giving us slops. I knew all the time that I needed a stimulant, but I never thought of coffee being strong enough to fill the bill."

"It's not always safe to give a fellow in your condition such coffee as this," was Stuart's reply. "But Jackson says our worst climb is just below. I thought I would brace you up for it."

It was well that he did, for as they went on the danger rapidly increased. Miller seemed like another person, and chose his steps as carefully as did the others. All his surliness and inertia had vanished, giving place to the cheery alertness which made him a favorite with those who knew him when at his best.

Jackson and Gordon led the way in the descent. Then Hallock came, followed by Stuart.

"Take it slowly, Hal," the latter said, as the steep divides became more frequent. "Don't try to keep up with Jackson. He is a regular chamois where climbing is concerned. And Gordon also has had long experience. You and I can afford to take it more leisurely."

Scarcely had the words left his lips when Hallock made an unlucky move. He slipped, but caught himself, and stood, partially braced, gazing down into the awful abyss that yawned at his side.

"Look up, Hal. You'll grow dizzy if you look into that chasm," Stuart cried. As he spoke he braced himself, for he felt the rope tightening and knew that Hallock was again slipping; and then, in a moment, Hallock regained his footing. The sudden slackening of the rope was so unexpected that it threw Stuart off his balance. The next instant he slid sidewise over the divide, and down beyond where Hallock was poised. He caught at a projection and gained an insecure foothold, just as his weight caused his friend to totter.

How long he could maintain his precarious position he did not know. He gave one glance downward. Then he fixed his eyes on Hallock. The latter was pale as ashes. Stuart saw that the fear of death from being dragged over into

the terrible abyss by his friend's weight had unmanned him.

"I am ready to go. He is not. My Captain will look out for me. Life or death—what does it matter? I am in his arms, either way," was the thought that prompted his next movement.

This was to carefully draw out his pocket-knife. Before either Jackson or Gordon, who had just discovered his position, could guess his intention, he had severed the rope that bound him to Hallock.

"Make yourself secure," he called, in a quiet tone. "Do not think of me. Get into a safe place before you look at me again."

He felt his foothold giving away.

"Well, if this is the way he chooses to call me into his presence, I believe I can say 'amen,'" was the thought that illumined his face with such a glow that Jackson, who was intently watching him, exclaimed, "He must see some way of escape, for he is smiling."

But the next moment the figure upon which his gaze rested, slipped swiftly down the divide.

For a moment Jackson closed his eyes. The next he cried, "Look! He is safe. He has caught on that spur."

"Quick," was Gordon's response. "Miller,

give me your long rope. If we can fling it to him before he slips again we may save him."

The rope was passed to him with as little loss of time as possible. Then Jackson and Gordon threw it over the precipice.

"Tie it under your arms," Jackson called.

"Suppose it is not long enough to reach him," Gordon added, almost in a whisper, as he bent to watch its descent.

It went down, down the dizzying precipice, swinging to and fro, until it passed the spot where the solitary figure rested.

It seemed almost like hours to those who were breathlessly watching before it ceased its swinging motion. This was caused by the force of its descent as well as by the wind.

Then they saw Stuart make one, two, three, ineffectual attempts to seize it. The fourth time he succeeded.

"All right," was the word that came cheerily up.

But it was not an easy task to retain his place on the narrow spur on which he had caught, and at the same time adjust the rope so as to make himself secure.

This was at last accomplished, however, and again his voice called, "All right. Brace yourselves and pull. I am ready."

Hallock was helplessly sitting on a rocky projection. His face was turned away from the chasm into which Stuart had slipped. Evidently his nerves were not sufficiently strong to witness the scene which he believed was transpiring down those awful depths.

As he listened to Stuart's last call he turned his head and looked down. Tears of relief and joy sprang to his eyes.

"Thank God, he is saved," he murmured.

And he was. It was only a few moments later that Stuart was standing by Jackson's side, not only safe, but uninjured.

Few words were spoken. It is not the custom of men of the calibre of those in this party to waste time and breath in needless expressions of gratitude and relief. The warm clasp of Jackson's hand, and the pressure of Gordon's arm across his shoulder, spoke volumes to the rescued man. Hallock's eyes were still misty, and his lips quivered as he said, "I thought you were gone, Stuart."

"There is one question I would like to ask," Jackson remarked, as he began to coil the rope preparatory to placing it in the pack.

"And what is that?" was Stuart's query.

"Just before you took your last slide, did you think you saw a way of escape? I was watching

you, and I saw you smile. I was relieved, for I was sure you saw some way of saving yourself; but the next instant you were gone."

Stuart considered a moment before he said, "No, I thought I was booked for the bottom; but I remember what I was thinking about."

Then he told, in a few brief sentences, what the reader already knows.

Jackson made no reply. He was stooping over his pack when Stuart began to speak. As he shouldered his burden he flashed a keen glance into the speaker's face. But when he spoke, his words had no reference to what had just been said. He remarked, "The worst of the climb is over. With ordinary care no one need slip. We will reach a good camping place in less than an hour. With good luck we can get to the valley to-morrow."

When the base of the mountain was at last reached Hallock Miller repeated the words he had once before spoken.

"I have had enough of Mount Tacoma for the balance of my life. Had I known what was before me, there is not money enough in the State of Washington to have tempted me to make the ascent."

"I am with you there," was Jackson's comment; "but as I did not make the ascent for

money, you will not mind my saying I would go again to-morrow if the same motive that led me this time was again presented." Then he added, "As you will share the honor of the discoveries I have made, I should fancy this would mollify your resentment against the frowning giant. On the whole, I think the old fellow has treated us well."

"So do I," was Stuart's quick indorsement. "We forced an ascent when he had his danger signal well out. That he has permitted all of us to come down with no serious mishap as a reminder of his anger, speaks well for him. He is but a surly fellow at best, as we all know."

That each one of the party, however, was relieved to again reach the equable temperature found at the base of the mountain was evident.

Stuart Holcombe, in spite of hardships endured, had steadily gained both in color and weight during every day of his absence from the office. When Lawyer Henderson saw his improved condition he exclaimed, "Was not my prescription a good one? And I really believe, while you have been away, I have found a clue that may enable you to unravel the Claymore tangle."

This was indeed good news to his partner.

When questioned the elder man gave several

points which needed to be investigated. Then he said, "I want you to go out to Robert Fielding's to-morrow. There are certain things you must find out from him. His daughter has just returned from relatives in the East, where she has been in college. It is through one of those relatives I hope to get light. He is a minister of the gospel. John Atwell by name. Find out if he is still living, and get his address for me."

This was a pleasing mission for Stuart. He was not sorry for the opportunity of seeing Edgar, from whom he had not heard since they parted on the mountain.

And as he had long been desirous of meeting Helen's loved friend, Florence Fielding, the visit to the ranche would enable him to gratify this wish.

How, and under what circumstances he met the merry girl, has been shown in a previous chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

JUST IN TIME.

IN spite of the threats of vengeance expressed against Clam to Mag Malloy, Nat Jones at first greeted his son's return from the hunting trip with nothing more caustic than sneers.

While Clam no longer feared personal violence from the man he called father, for the boy had determined within his own heart that he would never again submit to the brutal chastisements which had so often marked his past experience, he was relieved to find his parent in a seemingly more amiable mood than was usual with him.

The boy brought with him, on his return to the miserable place he called home, quite a generous supply of groceries. Whether this fact mollified Nat's anger against him because of his unexpected absence on the hunting trip, Clam could not determine. At any rate, the old man—old in appearance if not in years—contented himself with uttering jeering remarks over the young hunters' presumable sufferings because of Clam's crude culinary skill.

"If you put the young gents off with such cooking as you generally give me, I wonder they didn't shoot you," was his amiable remark, after he had drawn from Clam a brief account of the outing.

While this man sometimes lapsed into the rude vernacular of the lower strata of society in which he moved, it was noticeable that both he and Clam usually spoke as do those of gentle birth and breeding.

The boy smiled, but made no response. He was mentally recalling Edgar Fielding's keen appetite for Mrs. Fielding's dainty and bountiful luncheon which had been served them at the ranche the previous day.

Clam had spent the night in Tacoma with Oscar Henderson, by that young gentleman's urgent invitation. This petted youth's fancy for the lonely boy had ripened into warm friendship. He therefore treated Clam, in all respects, as his friend and equal, and he quite resented Lawyer Henderson's reference, after Clam had left them, to the boy's low parentage.

"Old Nat is a beast, of course, father, because he is a sot; but he may have been a gentleman by birth. He doesn't talk like the herd he runs with; and Jones is as thorough a gentleman as you ever saw. I respect him because

he has kept himself clean and true. Most fellows, with his surroundings, would not be decent. And he is a well-read fellow, too. How he has managed it I don't see, but he knows more about Shakespeare and Byron than I do."

The lawyer's eyes twinkled as he responded, "Does that mean he knows both of them were Englishmen?"

Oscar tried to frown, but failed. He burst into a merry laugh instead.

"I know I am not as literary in my tastes as you wish, father, but I am not quite the dunce you would make out," he said. Then he added, "Why wouldn't you promise him a place in the office, father? I am sure he would suit you."

"I like the boy well enough; but I can't run the risk of having his sot of a father loafing about my office," was the lawyer's reply. "Besides, I expect a boy this evening to fill the place."

Could he have foreseen the changes the next few weeks were destined to bring into Clam's life, his answer might have been different.

At the very moment his last words were being uttered, Nat Jones, who was alone in his tumble-down shanty, was muttering, "He thinks I've no notion of flogging him! As if I hadn't laid awake o' nights planning how to teach him

his lesson. When I'm done with him he'll never go off again without telling me."

His eyes glowed with almost the ferocity of a wild beast's as he crossed the room and drew a new raw-hide from under the torn quilts of his bed. He passed the cruel-looking instrument of torture through his hands again and again, as though its touch gave him pleasure.

"He'd better crawl into his bed early to-night and get a long night's sleep. It's the last one he'll enjoy for one while, unless my arm has lost its strength," he muttered, as he replaced the whip in its hiding place.

That night, after the rude supper had been served and the dishes cleared away, Clam retired, saying, "If you don't mind, father, I will give you an early breakfast to-morrow. There's a lot of work half promised me down at the brick-yard, and I want to be on hand before some other fellow gets it."

Old Nat grunted, but made no answer.

How long he slept the boy never knew. He was tired, and his sleep was more sound than usual. Once during the night an ugly dream disturbed him. He thought a hideous reptile was wrapping itself about his wrists and ankles. He moaned, straightened himself upon his couch, but again fell into slumber.

He wakened with a start, and with a wonder in his heart if he had overslept himself. He essayed to rise, but found himself powerless to do so.

He was bound hand and foot to the bed on which he lay. Strive as he might, he could not free himself.

He was too familiar with his brutal father's tactics not to understand what was in store for him. While old Nat had never before tied him while he slept, this was not the first time the heavy ropes had bound his wrists and ankles so that he was powerless to defend himself.

He saw flushing the east the rosy tint of dawn through the one, uncurtained window of the room. The faint light discovered his father lying across his bed, apparently asleep.

Clam closed his eyes. A feeling almost of despair stole into his heart. Many times since he had reached the age of thoughtful boyhood, had he been tempted to forever leave the brute who called himself his father. But a gentle twinge of conscience, a fear lest the man might starve if thus deserted, had deterred him from yielding to the thought.

As he lay revolving the past, and sick with horror over the fate confronting him, a thought

of some words Stuart Holcombe had spoken while on the hunting trip, flashed across him.

His lips moved. For the first time since he could remember, he prayed. His prayer was addressed to Christ, for it was of his love and compassion the young lawyer had spoken.

"Oh, Jesus Christ! If you do love me, as Mr. Holcombe said you did, won't you help me now? I would like to be good. I would be glad to know you in the way he told about. Can't you help me? Can't you save me from the awful beating father is going to give me?"

This was all he said. But there was much in his heart which his words did not cover. A deep longing to know and love God; a hearty desire to become a different boy from what he had ever been in the past, had been finding lodgment in his soul for days. And the divine eyes of the compassionate One, to whom he prayed, gazed down into his heart and there saw a jewel he coveted.

"It's about time we began our little interview, isn't it?"

Clam started and glanced across the room. Old Nat had been drinking. His bleared eyes indicated this fact. Something in their depths, as they now rested on the boy, struck new terror

into his soul. A very devil seemed to peer out from them.

He had risen from his couch, and now advanced to where the boy lay. The heavy raw-hide was in his hand.

"You thought I wouldn't settle with you, did you, for going off and leaving me to look out for myself? Well, old Nat knows his duty better than that. I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll not forget to your dying day. Do you hear?"

The morning sun was now streaming into the room, and some golden rays touched the boy's hair. They brought out a glint not noticeable in a light less strong. The sight added fresh fury to the man's wrath.

"Curse him," he muttered, just above his breath. "He's the living image of his father. I've half a mind to cut his throat and be done with him."

Even in his terror Clam caught at the words with an eagerness that did not escape the wretch before him.

"Curse you," he added, in a louder key. "You'd be glad to know you didn't belong to me, wouldn't you? Well, I don't mind telling you now, for I'm going to fix you so you'll never walk another step while you live. Much good it'll do you to know old Nat is not your daddy."

He raised the whip, and the next moment the stinging lash would have cut across the boy's bare throat and breast; but an interruption came.

So absorbed was the man in his fiendish work that he had not noticed the sound of hoof-beats nearing the cabin. He did not hear the quick tread of feet as they approached the door.

A peremptory knock arrested him as he raised the whip for its cruel blow.

He stood silent, not answering the summons, but scowling fiercely in the direction of the unwelcome visitor.

A second knock came. Then the latch was lifted; but a rude button held the door in its place.

"Jones, why don't you let me in? I know you are here, for I heard you talking as I came up."

Clam's heart gave a sudden bound. He recognized the voice. It was the young lawyer, Stuart Holcombe, who spoke.

"Press against the door, Mr. Holcombe," he said. "Hurry, for I need you."

The next moment the button was forced off, and the young man stood in the door-way.

Old Nat did not wait for him to speak. He hastily slunk out of the back door, and hurried down the road that led to the city.

CHAPTER XXII.

RIFTED CLOUDS.

IT was only the work of a moment for Stuart to loosen the bonds that bound the boy to the bed. Then he said, "What does this mean, Jones?"

"It means that Nat Jones wanted to kill me," Clam replied. "Had you not come, I believe he would have done it."

"And yet that man is your father!"

A glad light leaped to Clam's eyes.

"No, he is not. I have always believed he was 'till this morning. In his rage he admitted I was not his child."

"That is certainly good news," was Stuart's quick response. "It has always been hard for me to believe that you were his son. Did he tell you whose child you are?"

A shadow fell over the boy's face.

"No; I have no idea. I do not even know my name. Of course, if I am not his son, it cannot be Jones." He paused a moment, then added, "Oh! how glad I am to be free from him. It doesn't matter much about anything else."

"Wait until we get hold of him. I fancy we may be able to persuade him to tell us your history." As he spoke Stuart was looking about the room, taking a mental inventory of its cheerless aspect. Then he added, "I am the bearer of a message to you from Mr. Henderson. The office boy whom he engaged has disappointed us. We must have some one to fill the place at once. He offers the position to you. I came myself, for I am interested in you, and I wished to suggest that by taking the position you will be free to attend night-school if you so desire. This may prove an incentive, as I fancy you have never had much time for school duties and privileges."

The boy at once gratefully accepted the position, and his eyes sparkled at thought of being able to devote his evenings to study.

He at once gathered together his small possessions, Stuart not thinking it best for him ever to return to the shanty lest old Nat should again try to entrap and injure him.

As they wended their way into the city, Stuart walking his horse in order to keep pace with the boy, the young lawyer said, "What must I call you? If old Nat is not your father you will hardly want to retain his name."

"No, indeed," was the quick response. "I

shall be only too glad to get rid of it. And I never want to be called 'Clam' again, either. When I was a little fellow—I can just remember it—some one called me Clay. Father, old Nat I mean, must have changed it to Clam. He was fond of saying this name suited me, because I kept my mouth shut just like a stupid clam."

The boy's heart was so light over his altered fortunes that his tongue seemed to move by its own volition. Stuart was pleased to see how freely he now opened his heart, for he knew how reserved he had previously been.

"So you now wish to be known as Clay, do you?" he said with a smile.

"Yes. Clay Rutledge."

"Why Rutledge?" Stuart questioned, with a start of surprise.

"Old Nat used to have a book of poems beautifully bound, and with the name of Lucy Rutledge written in it. Once I asked him whose name it was. He cursed me, but afterwards said it was my mother's before she became his wife. I believe he told the truth about the name, for he afterwards hunted for the book, when he was in a rage, saying he was going to burn it because I was such a fool over it. You see I loved to read it because it belonged to my mother."

"Where is it now?"

"In this bundle. I hid it, and old Nat thinks it was lost when we moved from Missouri to Oregon. He has hunted for it a good many times." A puzzled expression crossed Stuart Holcombe's face as he listened to the boy's words.

But they were now in the city, and the conversation was discontinued.

Clay Rutledge, as he now called himself, proved a very satisfactory office boy. He was neat, quick, and obedient, seemingly glad to perform any duty that was laid upon him, even the most menial.

When Mr. Henderson learned that Nat Jones had admitted the boy was not his son, his satisfaction was expressed in a few brief sentences that caused Clay some surprise.

"I would have taken you into my office last fall had it not been for the old reprobate," he said. "I have been almost sorry sometimes that I kept him out of the penitentiary. Had he been locked up you would have been free, and I could have given you a chance to make a man of yourself. But I couldn't stand the thought of having old Nat loafing about. And I knew he would follow you if he thought you had a good berth."

The boy's heart was deeply moved when he thus learned that the busy lawyer had given an interested thought to him when he had supposed himself unnoticed.

"God must love me sure enough," he mused, as he busied himself over his duties. "He heard my prayer, and he wouldn't do that unless he cared about me; and now it turns out that Mr. Henderson has been wanting to help me for ever so long. I wonder when God first began to think about me."

His ideas on religious subjects were so crude that a carefully taught child of eight years would have smiled over them. But he was honestly groping for light, and the promise was being made true to him as it ever is to the searchers after divine truth, where God says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart."

One morning Stuart came to the office at an unusually early hour.

"See," he remarked, as he extended a neatly-wrapped parcel toward Clay. "I have brought you something that I hope you will enjoy and find a treasure. I consider it the most valuable thing any one can possess."

The boy took it without a word; but his face beamed with pleasure as he opened it and found that it was a handsomely bound Bible.

"How did you know I wanted one?" he asked, after he had expressed his thanks in no uncertain terms.

"Well, I cannot say that I absolutely knew you craved it; but I was aware of your need in this direction, and hoped the supply would please you. You will find that I have marked certain passages I thought might help you."

As he spoke Stuart bent over Clay's shoulder and rapidly turned the leaves of the volume until he came to the gospel written by St. John. He pointed to the chapters and verses he had marked, and added, "When once you get those truths into your heart, you will begin really to live."

The boy suddenly turned and faced the young man, and said, "How can one learn to know Jesus Christ? I want to know him; but I don't understand how to find him."

A rare smile curved the young lawyer's lips as he answered, "How do you know the sun has risen this morning?"

"Why, I see it shining yonder," was Clay's surprised answer, as he looked toward an eastern window.

"Was it shining in this room when you first came this morning?"

"No. It was up, but the blinds were down. I raised them the first thing so it would shine in."

"What made you want it to shine in?"

Clay smiled faintly as he answered, "Oh! I love to see it streaming in. And then I had to clean the room, and I needed the light to show me where the dirt was."

"Exactly. Well, Christ is called in the Word the Sun of righteousness. He is trying to shine into your heart as truly as the natural sun was trying to enter this room when it first rose over yonder hill-tops. But there are obstructions in the way that have prevented his doing this. You must get them out of the way as really as you got those blinds out of the way this morning."

"What are the obstructions?"

Clay's eyes were intensely in earnest as he asked this question.

"The first obstruction is sin. The next is lack of faith."

"How can I get them out of the way? I know about the sin, for I went to church last Sunday, and something the minister said showed me what a black heart I have. I thought I was almost all right until I heard what he said."

Stuart rapidly sketched for him what repen-

tance does for the soul; and then, in a few clear words, showed what it is to believe.

"Is that all?" The boy's face glowed as he asked the question.

"Yes, that is all. When one has taken these steps he has a right to say that he knows Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour."

"Then, Mr. Holcombe, I can say that now. The repentance—I didn't know what to call it—has been making me miserable ever since Sunday."

He paused and looked thoughtfully toward the window, then smiled, as he added, "I do believe that Jesus Christ is my Saviour right now."

"Are you still miserable?" As Stuart propounded this last question the sound of Mr. Henderson's feet was heard on the steps.

"Miserable? No, indeed. I feel as light as a feather. Thank you for your talk. I shall never see the sunshine without thinking about it."

He laid his Bible on a shelf which belonged exclusively to the office boy, and stepped nimbly forward, ready to take Mr. Henderson's hat and gloves. This little attention gave the lawyer fresh pleasure each day it was repeated, for Clay was the first boy in his employ who had ever done this.

Stuart's eyes were unusually bright as he greeted his partner.

"This is a joyful morning among the angels in heaven," he remarked, as the elder man seated himself at his desk.

Mr. Henderson stared into the young man's face in mild surprise.

"Have you been up to see?" he queried, with an indulgent smile. His partner's moods and words often amused him.

"Not exactly; but I have good authority for my assertion."

As he spoke Stuart drew a testament from his pocket, and, turning to the fifteenth chapter of Luke's gospel, placed his finger on the seventh verse, and said, as the elder man ran his eyes over the words, "There it is. The conditions have been met, so the joy is certain."

Clay stood near listening to the brief conversation with a smiling, although puzzled, face.

"Read the words aloud, please."

Mr. Henderson did so. As he finished he glanced inquiringly at Stuart.

"Clay, do you know what has occurred in this office within the last half hour?"

As the young man turned toward him with the question, a beam of spiritual intelligence seemed to flash across the untutored boy's heart.

“Why—yes—perhaps I do,” he answered, hesitatingly. “I am a sinner; I have repented; I have believed that Jesus Christ has come into my heart.” And then, with a joyful light breaking over his face, he quickly added: “And I never, in all my life, was so happy as I am right now.”

“The case is proven. The testimony of your witness is to the point, and unimpeachable,” Lawyer Henderson remarked, as he handed the testament to Stuart, and turned toward his desk. He drew out some papers, but before he fell to perusing them he added, “I think I am safe in saying that such a case as the one just considered has never before been tried in this office. As it belongs exclusively to you, all the perquisites accruing therefrom will be placed to your credit.”

Stuart broke into laughter that was pleasant to hear as he listened to these words. Then he said, “Who can compute the magnitude of such perquisites? They will go on increasing through all eternity.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

AMONG THE SHADOWS.

“LYNNE, Cousin Marcia wants you to go with her to see one of her Sunday-school scholars who is sick. She says the boy has the grippe, and needs medicine. Can you call for her as early as eight-thirty in the morning?”

The speaker was Ned Hunter. The hour was evening. Dr. Traver was in his office, and Ned had called at the door on the way home from business.

“Certainly. I shall be glad to see the child. I suppose he belongs in the slums. I think Miss Rivers’ class is in the Mission School, out on Lowe street,” was the physician’s quick reply.

“Yes. Cousin Marcia seems to have caught some of your enthusiasm over the work needing to be done among the masses.” Ned paused to laugh, then added, “How long her interest will continue is another question. But she is in dead earnest just now.”

The doctor smiled. He was aware that Miss

Rivers was apt to be in "dead earnest" over her numerous fads, but he also knew that the interest was often as brief as it was violent.

"Your cousin is a very charming character," he remarked. "When she is a little older she will be less capricious."

"I am sure that is true," Ned responded. "She is really the sweetest girl I know, but her frequent change of base is sometimes rather bewildering. Not long ago she was passionately devoted to the flower mission craze in the hospitals. Last week I innocently asked if she were going to give a superb calla lily she was growing in the conservatory to the mission. I wish you could have seen her look of scorn. If I had asked her if she were going to join the Mormons she couldn't have been more indignant."

Again Ned laughed in his pleasant way, and Dr. Traver smiled as he asked, "What caused her to throw over the flower mission?"

"Solon himself couldn't answer that question. Give me something easy, won't you?" Then he added, more gravely, "She said the mission was a scheme to get people's flowers from them, and the half never got to the hospital. Marcia is mistaken, though, I am sure. But I must be going. Don't disappoint her in the morning. She will take it to heart if you do."

"I will be on hand at eight-thirty, promptly," was the reply.

Late that night, before he retired, Lynne Traver went to a private drawer in his secretary and took therefrom a little case carefully wrapped in a piece of pink silk. He opened it with a sigh, and gazed long and earnestly upon the pictured face therein revealed.

We will take the liberty of also looking upon the smiling countenance. It is no stranger whom we see, but the delicate features of Helen Holcombe. The picture must have been taken when she was but a school-girl, but the likeness is a perfect one. If the face lacks much of the soul-charm which now characterizes it, it also has a girlish sparkle that is very fascinating.

"Why do I keep this, I wonder, when Helen is dead to me," he asked, in a musing tone. "A nobler and a stronger man than I shall ever be has won the love I coveted."

He leaned his head back against his chair and closed his eyes, still holding the picture in his hand. He sat thus for many minutes.

At length he aroused himself, glanced again upon the smiling face and murmured, as he enveloped the case in its silken foldings, "Helen, you will never know it, but your sweet woman-

liness has spoiled me for all others. I almost wish I could love Marcia Rivers," he added, thoughtfully. "She is sweet and winsome; but my heart is dead to her. Perhaps, years hence, when the old wound is wholly healed, I may find some noble woman whom I can love, and who will be willing to love me a little."

At that very moment the subject of the young physician's thoughts lay peacefully sleeping in the beautiful city of Tacoma. Happy dreams visited her, for her lips parted in a smile, and one word broke from them. This word was "Lynne."

Her own glad cry aroused her. She opened her eyes and saw the white moonlight falling over her bed, and knew her joy was as baseless as the dream from which it emanated.

She covered her eyes with one slender hand, and tears ran slowly over her cheeks.

Verily, our world seems to have gone hopelessly awry when two hearts that loved as did these, are parted by a shadow as unsubstantial as the mists of early morning.

The patient to whose bedside Marcia Rivers conducted Dr. Traver the following morning was found to be extremely ill. A daily visit was promised, and in the fulfillment of this promise the young physician might have been

seen about eight o'clock the following evening hurriedly wending his way in the direction in which the boy lived. The walk carried him through a dark and lonely street in one of the worst neighborhoods of the city.

"I will surely try and find time to make this visit before darkness settles down to-morrow," he thought, as he picked his way along the rough sidewalk.

Once or twice he thought he caught the sound of stealthy footsteps following him. He turned, but saw no one.

"This would be an ugly place in which to meet a 'foot-pad,'" he murmured. Then he smiled and spoke aloud, "What a faithless soldier I am not to know my Captain's eye is on me. Is not his Word pledged to guard from all evil those who trust in him?"

He made his call on the sick boy, and found him decidedly better. Much pleased, and with the determination to see Miss Rivers in the morning and acquaint her with the fact, he walked briskly down the shadowed street which seemed even darker than when he had passed up its gloomy length a half hour previous.

Suddenly, without any warning, there was a flash, a report, and a bullet whizzed past his head. At the same moment he heard a voice

he well remembered, utter a volley of oaths almost at his elbow.

He was passing an alley, and it was from this point the voice came.

The sound of blows followed, and some one cried: "Slip the bracelets on him, quick, Jim."

The light from a bull's-eye lantern flashed into his face. By its rays he saw Barney O'Ryan in the grasp of two policemen.

The man fought like a tiger, and one of the policemen received an ugly gash in the neck from the saloon-keeper's knife before he was overpowered.

As they led him away the wounded man said to Lynne, "He's been following you for two nights. I spotted him last night, and I've been on his track ever since. You'd have been a dead man if Jim hadn't crept up close enough to knock up his pistol just as he fired on you. This job 'll put him behind the bars, sure."

O'Ryan's face was distorted with passion. The light from the lantern brought out the rage depicted upon it with such vividness that Dr. Traver shuddered. The man looked an incarnated devil.

"I'd be willin' to spend the rest o' my days behind the bars ef on'y I could a' seen yer dead

afore I went," he muttered, scowling at Lynne in impotent fury.

When the physician at last entered his room that night his first act was to drop on his knees and pour out his heart in thanks to God, who had preserved him amid such danger.

O'Ryan was sent to the penitentiary for a goodly number of years, as the policeman had predicted. This fact gave great relief to Dr. Traver's friends, for they knew the young man's life would have been in hourly danger had the man been freed.

"You're a lucky fellow, anyhow," Ross Rivers said to him the day the saloon-keeper received his sentence. "Any other man would certainly have received his quietus from the ruffian if he had crossed him as you have done. I didn't think your life was worth the snap of my finger when Ned told me of your proceedings against him."

Lynne had a cordial liking for Ross. He looked earnestly into his face as he replied, "From a human standpoint, I believe your thought of danger was well founded. But it does not do to leave God out of our reckonings."

"You mean—" Ross hesitated.

"I mean that a man who tries to order his life on God's plan, becomes invulnerable until his

work is done. God sees to it that his trust in him is not betrayed."

"What proof have you to back that assertion?" Ross quickly asked.

"God's word. If you will study it carefully you will find the truth of what I have said plainly taught within its pages."

The young worldling turned away with a thoughtful face, and Dr. Traver's heart sent this message over the electric wires that closely connect every true believer with the throne above, "Open his eyes, dear Father, and teach him the way of Life."

The message went direct, and ere long an answer came that more than satisfied the young man's heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WANING STRENGTH.

FLORENCE FIELDING'S plan for having Helen spend a week at the ranche did not materialize.

The latter gave first one excuse, then another for deferring the visit, until the heavy rains set in. Stuart then decided the matter by saying that Helen must not think of going to the country until the balmy days of April or May were upon them.

He felt troubled over his sister's continued languor, although Helen still declared herself perfectly well.

Sarah Grant's expressive face became daily more thoughtful as she watched her cousin's listless demeanor. Helen's had been such a joyous, buoyant nature until the past eighteen months or two years, that it was not strange anxiety, because of the change, began to take possession of hearts that so tenderly loved her.

In a hundred little ways Sarah's affection manifested itself. Her nature was innately re-

finer, and she shrank from any open manifestation of sympathy because of the sorrow she was certain was pressing on the heart of one so dear to her.

Freddie Stokes was still a frequent visitor in the home, and his original remarks amused and aroused Helen as nothing else seemed to do.

As the boy's mother was more æsthetic than religious in her tastes, Helen sometimes sought to give Freddie an insight into spiritual truth. She found the task a difficult one, for the wide-awake boy was always surprising her by the unexpected replies he would give to her teaching.

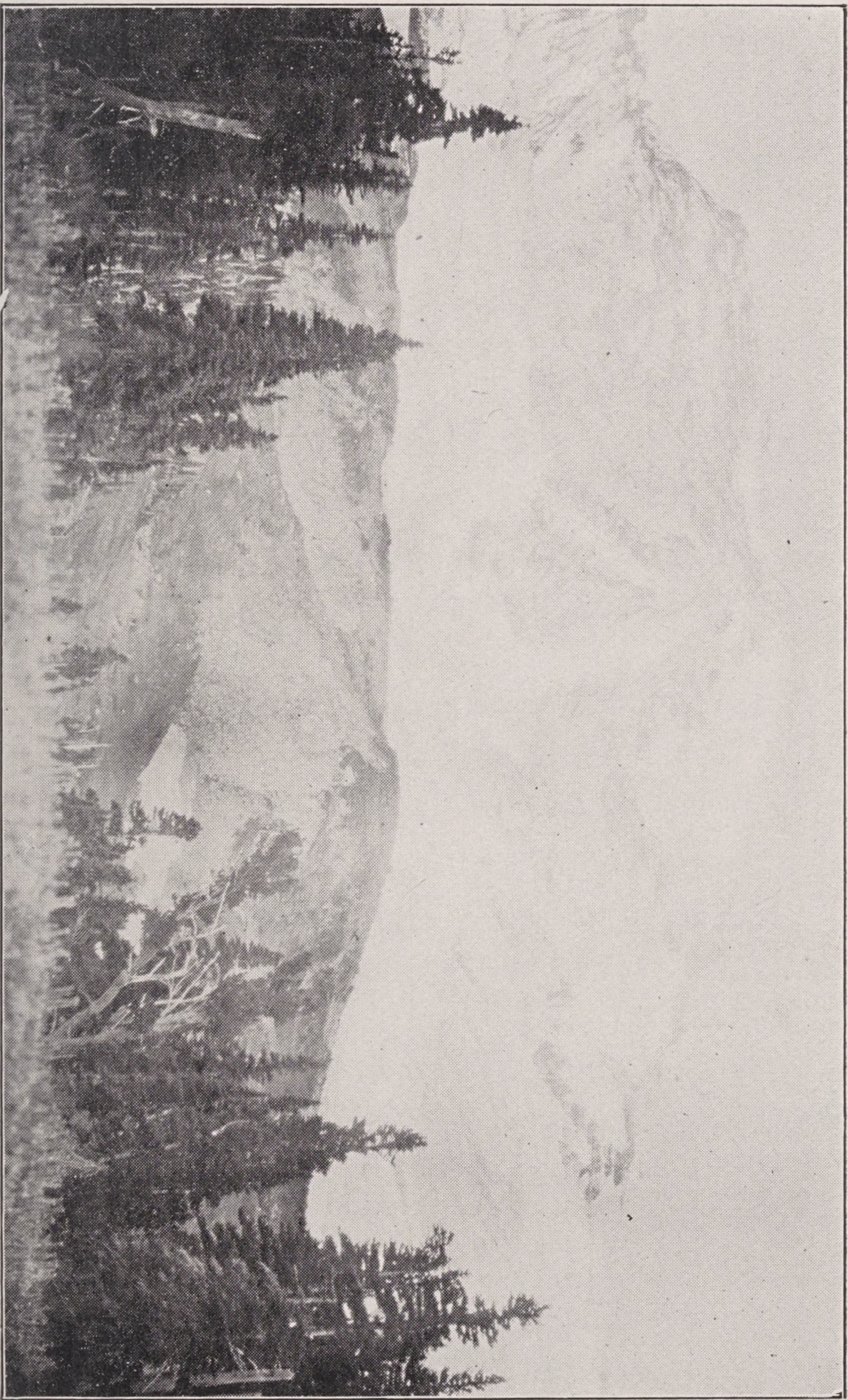
One day she had enticed him into listening quietly to her while she told him, in winning words, about God, and of his love for us as manifested through Christ Jesus.

As she paused Freddie drew himself very erect. He had been leaning against her knee while she talked. He looked her squarely in the face.

"Well, then I don't like God."

Quite shocked, Helen said, in a reproving voice, "But you ought not to say that, Freddie. Don't you know God can hear everything you say?"

"Does he hear me now?" the boy inquired, evidently impressed by her words.



VIEW OF SUMMIT, TAKEN AT FIVE THOUSAND FEET ELEVATION.

"Yes, indeed. He hears every word you speak."

Freddie stepped back, looked toward the ceiling of the room and elevated his voice quite noticeably as he remarked: "Well, then, I likes God."

After which he came close to Helen and asked, in a whisper, "Do you s'pose he's mad with me now?"

The evident desire to win God's favor through deception was so apparent that, in spite of a momentary feeling of amusement, Helen was saddened.

She tried to make him understand something of God's omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. She, of course, did not mention these long words to the child, but chose such language in which to convey to his mind the truths she desired him to grasp, as she thought he could understand.

Sarah Grant entered the room while she was speaking. Freddie at once turned, held up his little hand and said, with the utmost solemnity, "Sarah, do you know God am a' settin' right on the end o' my thumb?"

"What in the world is the boy talking about?" was Sarah's surprised exclamation.

"Yes he am. Helen says so. And he knows

I wants a cookie, too; and he's a' goin' to make you give me two of 'em, 'cause I's awful hungry."

The child had evidently caught a fuller glimpse of the truth than many adults have done, although his practical application of the same was as unexpected as it was amusing.

It is needless to add that Freddie got his cookies, and also a hearty kiss from Sarah's smiling lips.

This lesson satisfied Helen's idea of duty toward the child for some days. Freddie rang the changes on what he had learned in such varied keys that his teacher was often puzzled to follow the workings of his active little mind.

When the Sabbath came Helen felt too languid to attend church. So Stuart and Sarah set off without her, each of them with a deepening sense of uneasiness over her failing strength, which was not expressed to the other.

Freddie came over to give the fair invalid the tonic of his energetic presence, and it was not long until Helen had coaxed him into sitting quietly by her knee while she told him a story.

His passion for tales was boundless, and to-day Helen chose the marvellous one about Jonah, thinking to convey to him an idea of

obedience to God's will as being essential to man's welfare as well as his happiness.

Freddie listened to the narrative with wide-open eyes and interested ears. Not once did he interrupt her with questions until, at the close, Helen remarked, "And then, after the great fish spewed Jonah out of his mouth, Jonah went at once and preached to the people of Nineveh, as God had commanded him."

"My! But, Miss Helen, didn't he wait to wash heself 'fore he preached to 'em?" was the boy's earnest question, which sent Helen into a peal of such merry laughter as had not broken from her lips for months.

Freddie did not remove his elbows from her lap, nor his eyes from her face, while her merriment thus bubbled over. Instead he waited in seeming perplexity until she grew quiet. Then he repeated his question, adding, "Folks would a-runned away from him, I 'spect, if he hadn't washed, 'cause he wouldn't a-smelled good. Is you laffin' 'bout that?" *

Helen had to draw on her imagination for her answer as to Jonah's ablutions, as the Word does not enlighten us on that point. But Freddie was satisfied, and soon turned his attention

* These incidents, as amusing as they are, really occurred.

to another subject, which engaged him until he was called home for dinner.

About this period Rodney Jackson called again. He had not visited the Holcombe fire-side until now since his trip up the mountain.

His manner was as frankly friendly as ever, and no one would have suspected, from his words or bearing, that any lover-like regard prompted his interest in Helen.

This fact placed the girl at her ease, and she listened to his conversation with the same interest it had always held for her. She thoroughly liked him, and enjoyed his calls.

Sarah Grant was sitting with Helen when he came, engaged in embroidering a fancy sofa-cushion, for, to her well-rounded character was added the feminine accomplishment of rare aptitude in needle work. As Helen quietly insisted that she should continue with them, after the visitor was seated, Sarah did so, placing her chair at such an angle that she could watch Helen's face while Jackson talked.

She did not notice that the gentleman's position was such that his eyes naturally fell upon her as he talked with Helen, nor did she suspect what a striking picture she made.

Sarah's estimate of her own personal attractions was a very modest one, although Stuart

had once teasingly told her that she was "the handsomest woman he knew, as well as the most efficient."

The remark had so evidently annoyed her that it had never been repeated, although Stuart held his opinion unchanged, and often remarked to Helen that it seemed a shame so fine a woman as their cousin should absolutely shut herself off from all social privileges.

But Sarah Grant was peculiar in her ideas, and seemed to desire no further pleasures than were granted her in caring for her cousins' welfare.

As Rodney Jackson launched into a description of some of the incidents connected with the trip up the mountain, Sarah listened with eager attention. This was due to the fact that Rodney chiefly dealt with Stuart's cool heroism in meeting danger, and, as the narrator expressed it, "His strange reliance on a divine presence that never, for a moment, left him." In answer to Helen's glance of inquiry over these words, he related the incident of Stuart severing the rope that bound him to Hallock Miller, and then of her brother's smile when he thought he was going to the bottom of the precipice.

"When he told me afterwards that he was expecting to meet death the next instant, I felt, for

the first time in my life, a real desire to be a Christian. If ever I am one, it will be because Stuart Holcombe has so impressed me with the power there is in the life he is living, that I will be willing to sacrifice everything that I may have the same thing. For," he added, thoughtfully, "the wise ones tell us we can't have the genuine article if we hold to anything else."

As he thus spoke Sarah suddenly lifted her eyes and looked directly into Jackson's face. Something in her gaze fascinated and almost startled him. There was an intensity of emotion in the expression for which his slight acquaintance with her had not prepared him. She soon arose and left the room.

"What a singularly attractive woman your cousin is. I wonder I never before noticed this," was Rodney's comment.

Helen's smile of pleasure over the words revealed how deeply Sarah had entrenched herself in her cousin's affections.

"She is a very rare and noble woman. I am glad you begin to appreciate her. She is so reserved, and usually holds herself so aloof from people, that few know her as she deserves to be known," was her quick reply.

"But I feel troubled over the way the lily is transplanting the rose in your face," Jackson

said, seeming to dismiss Sarah Grant from his mind. He bent toward the sofa where Helen sat, with such an expression of tender concern in his eyes as they rested on her, as suddenly dyed the girl's cheek to a fleeting crimson.

"Oh! I shall soon be well again," she said, hastily. "I have felt the unusual cold of the winter, somewhat. When spring comes I shall be as strong as ever."

"I hope so," he responded, rising. "One of your brother's axioms comes to me. It is from the Bible, I believe. 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine!' Am I wrong in fancying that a shadow is over you? Is there no way in which I can help lift it?"

The gentleness and unaffected sympathy of his tone brought a quick mist to Helen's eyes.

"Thank you," she softly replied. "No one can help me. I shall be all right again soon."

"I hope so," was again his response, as he bade her good-bye.

CHAPTER XXV.

WEDDING BELLS AND OTHER BELLS.

THAT Hallock Miller had been a wild youth, the lines of suffering on his mother's face clearly attested. He was her only child, and she was a widow.

But, as has already been intimated, Hallock had met and fallen deeply in love with one of those dove-like Christian girls whose very gentleness reach a certain type of men as nothing else can do.

Just at the period of which we write, Hallock's social and amiable qualities seemed changed. He avoided his former associates, and, in his determination to master his vices, among which was a love of wine and strong drink, and a passion for gambling, he grew almost morose.

The fight was a fierce one, but love for Edith Ashton won the victory, and after an engagement which lasted ten months, the gentle girl became his wife.

Hallock now considered himself the happiest man on earth, and Stuart Holcombe, who had

always loved him, felt hopeful that a long and useful life stretched before him. The latter remarked to Helen: "I should feel more certain about Hal if it was Divine love that had possession of his heart and had turned him squarely around. A pure human love is precious, but nothing short of the power of God, through a vital union with Jesus Christ, can make a man safe from evil habits. Especially is this true when the habits have been the growth of years, as is the case with Hal."

"Let us hope that Edith's love can win him to yield his heart to God," was Helen's answer.

Stuart one day expressed to Hallock something of the thought given above. The latter laughed happily as he replied, "You don't know the power Edith wields over me, or you wouldn't think I needed anything stronger to keep me straight."

Then he added, "I would like to be a Christian for Edith's sake. But, somehow, my heart has always seemed to shrink away from God. To me he appears much as he did to the unprofitable servant, to whom one talent was given. You know he told him to his face that he was a hard and austere man."

"But that is because you do not know him, Hal," was Stuart's pained reply.

Hallock shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps it is. But I don't mind confessing to you that I have never cared for a closer acquaintance. If I live a moral, upright life the balance of my days, I shall not be afraid to meet him when the end comes."

Stuart attempted to refute this dangerous error, but Hallock turned abruptly away, saying, "No use in arguing, Stuart. You know we never did agree on these points, even before you cast in your lot with the family of saints. As Edith belongs to the same household, I shall doubtless have more patience with your whims in the future than I have had in the past; but, all the same, I don't care to discuss them with you."

After this brief conversation a little cloud fell over Stuart Holcombe's heart whenever his thoughts reverted to his friend. Nor did he seem able, when in prayer, to present his case before the throne with any assurance of faith. His love for Hallock seemed stronger than ever before, and he hoped much for him because of his wife, but whenever he plunged down into the deeper recesses of his own heart he was conscious that a fear for his friend was hiding there.

That Hallock Miller was a changed man, all

who knew him could testify. His thoughtful affection for his mother was now beautiful to see, and the winning traits which had once made of him such a promising boy, again began to blossom into exuberant life.

His charming little home, which had been a wedding gift from his mother, seemed an earthly paradise, and Mrs. Miller, in a measure, forgot the years of sorrow which had preceded this season of joy and peace.

"It does not seem possible that you were ever the wild, reckless man which Cousin Sam Telford told me to-day you were before I knew you," Edith said to him one evening, as she laid her cheek against his arm.

"Sam ought to know, for he was one of my chums," Hallock returned, fondly stroking her cheek. "I am glad to see that Sam has also turned about, and seems to be settling down to business."

"If you should ever again touch wine, dear, or engage in gambling, I believe it would break my heart," Edith said, with a shiver.

"Don't be afraid," he answered. "There is no possible danger."

"Have you altogether lost your taste for wine?" she questioned, gazing earnestly into his eyes.

"I have never touched it to find out," he replied, with a laugh. "The craving for it has passed away long since. Don't let such thoughts fill your head. Your love has so changed me, darling, that I am not the same man I was before I met you."

To him she seemed content; but a little shadow had fallen upon her heart. Whenever, after that evening, he failed to be at home promptly, a terror seized her, and she would watch for him with an anxiety that became pathetic to those who knew of his dissolute past.

Mrs. Miller, who had given her last earthly possession to purchase the home for her son, now had her abode with him. While she always soothed Edith's unspoken fears with words of cheer whenever Hallock was detained from them until a later hour than usual, her own heart secretly responded to her daughter-in-law's anxiety, and the old lines of care would again mar the serenity of her gentle face.

But, as the weeks and months rolled away, and Hallock showed no sign of returning to his former habits, the shadow lifted from the hearts of the two women, and Mrs. Miller felt that her days of suffering were past.

And the gentle Edith, day by day, blossomed into fresh sweetness and beauty under the joy of

her husband's love. More and more she gave herself up to the happiness of his tender care for her welfare, and often her heart would say, "Was ever a wife so guarded and cherished as I?"

One day, while reading the Word, a certain passage arrested her attention. She had often seen it before, but it had never impressed her as it did to-day. She carried the sacred volume to Mrs. Miller's room, questioning, "Mother, what does this passage mean? I never seem to have thought about the verse until to-day." Then she read aloud, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

"It means separation from all evil. God means his people to be a separated people," was Mrs. Miller's reply.

But Edith was not satisfied. "Mother," she said, slowly, "does this teach that I did wrong in marrying Hallock? He is an unbeliever, you know."

Mrs. Miller made no answer. A shadow fell over her face.

Tears came into Edith's eyes as she noticed the change in the elder woman's countenance.

"Yes, that is what you think it teaches," she

said, in a low tone. "And I never noticed this verse especially until this afternoon."

She sat in silence for many moments. Then she said, "What must I do, mother?" And then, as the thought of what Mrs. Miller's possible answer might be, dawned on her, she exclaimed, passionately, "I will never leave him. Never, never. I would rather be lost forever than do that."

"God does not want you to leave him, dear," was the mother-in-law's gently spoken reply. "Whatever wrong there may have been was committed when you married him. I have always hoped and believed that your influence over him would lead him to become a Christian."

"I have had the same hope," Edith responded. "But, mother, he will not listen when I try to talk to him about God. He always turns the conversation; and once or twice he has gone out of the room."

Mrs. Miller sighed. She knew, more fully than any one else, how persistently Hallock had always turned from holy things.

"You can pray for him," she said, softly.

"Oh! I do pray for him every day." As she thus spoke, Edith arose and left the room.

When in the privacy of her own apartment she asked herself this question, "Had I known what

this passage meant before I married Hallock, would I have separated myself from him?"

As she remembered the strength of her love for him; how her whole being had opened and responded to his passionate devotion to her, her heart made answer, "I should have married him just the same had I known. It seems dreadful, yet it is true."

This was a crisis in Edith Miller's life, although she was not then conscious of the fact.

From that day she dimly felt that God wanted to win her from her idolatrous love for her husband. And she met this feeling by casting herself more absolutely into Hallock's arms than ever before. "His love is my heaven," she murmured. "How can I separate myself from it? It is cruel in God to want to wean me from him."

She still prayed, but God seemed "afar off." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" kept sounding in her ears. But she turned away from the tender whisper, and clung more and more tenaciously to her idol.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SURMISES, NOT PROOFS.

STUART HOLCOMBE said to Clay one evening as he was leaving the office, "I want to see that book of poems of which you once spoke. The one which bears your mother's name. I meant to have examined it when you first came to us."

"I will bring it with me in the morning," was the boy's reply. He looked wistfully at the young lawyer as he added, "I am hoping that book may yet show me who my parents are. Oscar does not think I ought to take the name of Rutledge just because it is in the book. He says old Nat is such a liar he would tell me anything to keep me from bothering him, and the book may have been stolen property."

As Stuart paused to listen to these words he noticed an expression of distress on Clay's countenance. He could divine, as never before, the pain it caused the boy to be nameless as well as homeless.

"Oscar may be right," he remarked. "Yet I hope the volume may help establish your iden-

tity. Old Nat seems to have skipped. I was out there again yesterday, and no one has seen him about the place since you left."

Clay made no response, and the young lawyer passed out without further comment.

Mr. Henderson was in the office the next morning when Clay handed Stuart the little volume, saying, "Here is the book, sir."

The young lawyer took it and examined it with keen interest.

It was handsomely bound, and on the fly leaf, in dainty characters, was the name "Lucy C. Rutledge."

Without comment Stuart laid the open book on the desk in front of his partner.

Lawyer Henderson, who, at the moment was engaged in reading, frowned; but he glanced at the volume, knowing that Stuart never interrupted him without cause. His momentary impatience changed into quick interest as the name caught his eye.

"Where did this book come from?" he asked.

"Is there any significance in the name found written on that page?" was Stuart's counter query.

"Of course there is. The C. is especially so. There might be more than one woman named Lucy Rutledge, but the middle name would

seem to identify the owner of this book as the person for whom we are searching. Now tell me what you know about her."

"Absolutely nothing. I did not even know until a moment since of the C. in the signature. Had I been aware of this I should have examined the book earlier. Clay will tell you all he knows about the volume. It belongs to him."

A few words served to put the elder man in possession of the few facts known to the boy.

"We must see old Nat without delay," the lawyer remarked. "No doubt he can give us the information we seek."

When told that the man had disappeared he said, "A detective will soon unearth him. He is not far away, for it costs money to travel, and Nat is not burdened with 'filthy lucre.' " Then he looked attentively into Clay's face as he added, "Why do you call yourself Clay?"

The boy explained to him what the reader already knows, adding, "It is like a dream, yet I am certain it was a lady who called me Clay. And she must have been beautiful. I believe she was my mother. I seem to see her face, sometimes, when I first wake in the morning. I am sure she loved and petted me. I have not always been abused and knocked about as old

Nat abused me. I have felt this more fully since I got away from him."

This was a long speech for Clay to make, for he was usually chary of his words.

Mr. Henderson again observed his face and figure attentively. Then he changed the subject by saying, "I wish to retain this book for a while. It is possible we may be able to prove that you have a right to the name you have chosen, based on something stronger than a half-forgotten memory. Such fancies are often delusive. Now you may carry this deed down to Mr. Gray's office; and wait for some papers he will give you."

Thus dismissed, the boy went out; but his face was bright with hope.

"I shall not always be a nameless waif," he mused. "I believe God is going to show me who I am; and perhaps my father and mother may be living now. Old Nat may have stolen me. He is bad enough to have done almost anything."

As the boy passed into the street the elder lawyer looked keenly into the younger man's face, saying, "I believe our missing link is found. That boy's name is probably Claymore Rutledge. How Nat Jones got hold of him I cannot guess. Lucy Claymore Rutledge mar-

ried a man by the name of Jennings after Rutledge died. What became of her and her child, and of Jennings, is what no one has yet been able to discover. Old Nat may be able to tell us what we need to know."

"Helen's book of recipes gives a fact well worth remembering," Stuart remarked, with a smile. "It says, 'First catch your hare before you dress it.' We have not yet got hold of Nat Jones. He is a shrewd old fox, and if his motive for concealment is sufficiently strong, we may have to search a long time before he is found."

This surmise proved a correct one. Weeks passed, and, in spite of every effort, the detective force did not produce the missing man.

In the meantime Stuart Holcombe made several visits to the Fielding ranche. His ostensible reason for going was to enquire into certain facts supposed to be known to Mrs. Fielding's relatives in the East, in connection with Lucy Rutledge. His real reason was something much nearer his heart than even his desire to unravel the Claymore mystery; for his interest in Florence Fielding proved to be of so deep and tender a character that he was fain to admit to his own soul that no maiden he had ever met had so moved his heart as did Mrs. Fielding's merry "lassie."

Florence herself still tried to hold herself aloof from the young lawyer's friendly advances, alleging that his ways were so different from those of Sidney Gordon that she could not half enjoy his society.

She was honest in her assertion, for Gordon had really captured her girlish fancy. She therefore felt annoyed at Stuart's attempt to win her interest, mentally deciding that such a course was meant to displace her ideal from the lofty pedestal on which her imagination had mounted him.

But she was wholly heart free, the deeper recesses of her nature never having been stirred. Oscar Henderson came and went with the freedom of early days, and to him she solemnly confided the fact that the life of a spinster was to her the most attractive in the world.

"My nature is too independent ever to obey any man," she averred, with sparkling eyes. "Tennyson's 'Princess' was right in the proud position she assumed. But the way she succumbed at last was simply disgraceful. I always skip that part."

Oscar, much impressed by her words and manner, replied, "It would seem odd for you to be at the beck and call of any man. For that is what it means for a girl to marry, no matter

how sweetly they may put it in the books. I shall expect my wife to do whatever I like, and I suppose other men feel just the same way."

Floy coughed behind her hand and then said, with an arch glance into Oscar's face, "How long has it been, two or four years, since you cast your first vote?"

The young fellow blushed and replied, "It was the same year you put on long dresses."

As Floy usually wore her skirts of such a length as to insure freedom in walking, and in other exercises in which she indulged, this was a home thrust. Her merry laugh denoted her appreciation of the retort.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SERIOUS MOMENTS.

SIDNEY GORDON called at the ranche one day wearing so sober a countenance that Florence merrily remarked, "You look as grave as I imagine Napoleon Bonaparte did when he was banished to his lonely island. What is wrong?"

The young man caught at her playful words quite eagerly.

"That is about what has happened to me. I am called back to Portland. To me it seems quite like a desert island after my stay in Washington."

His expressive glance into her eyes would have brought a conscious blush to the cheek of a more susceptible girl than was Floy. She merely said, "Your holiday has been a long one. I should fancy it would seem good to again settle down to work."

Gordon broke into a light laugh. "Do you know," he said, in a confidential tone, "that I have never worked in my life? I have been an

idle fellow, a sort of genteel loafer, all my days."

"How dreadful," was Floy's quick comment.

"Do you think so? Well, I have found it quite pleasant, in the long run. Let me tell you a bit of my history."

Nothing loath, Florence settled herself in an attitude denoting attention, and Gordan began: "I am an orphan. My father left me plenty of money, but with it the written desire that when I finished my college course, I should study medicine. Of course I did so, and was formally graduated an M. D. That ended my ambition along that line. Since then I have gone wherever my fancy led me. I have a cousin living in Portland who is very fond of me. She and her husband think I am wasting my life, and I promised them when I came to Washington that I would go back to Portland whenever Arthur, that is my counsin-in-law's name, wrote for me. He is a lawyer, and now he writes that there is a political opening for me which he insists I must enter."

The young man paused a moment, but as Floy did not speak, continued, "I have always had an idea I should enjoy politics. I have a good many influential friends in Portland, and Arthur is a very popular fellow. Whoever he

might put forward would at once gain a hearing. He wants me to come on at once and begin the campaign by making speeches, and doing other silly things of that sort."

"Speeches are not silly if your heart is in them, and if you tell the truth," was Floy's hastily spoken comment.

Again Gordon broke into light laughter.

"But who ever does tell the truth when making a political speech?" he asked. "A fellow has got to talk to gain popularity."

"Well, if I were a man I know I would never utter a word that was not the truth, and which did not come from my heart, no matter whether it made me popular or not."

Floy's cheeks, as she thus spoke, were more pink than usual, and her eyes sparkled with unwonted lustre.

As her companion made no response she continued, "I would not dare do otherwise. It would not only be base, from my point of view, but it would displease God. He hates a lie as much as he hates drunkenness or murder."

Gordon gazed into Floy's face in evident surprise.

"Are you a Christian?" he asked, with blunt directness.

"Certainly I am. I joined the church the

year before I went to college. Why do you ask?"

"Well—because—the fact is—," he stammered. Then he stopped and began again.

"I have never before met any one like you. Christians are not usually jolly and happy. Not those I have known. Yes, there is one person I will except. Holcombe is a Christian of the genuine stamp; yet he is jolly, and seems to enjoy life as well as any one."

"And why should he not?" Floy's tone was almost scornful. "According to my code, a true Christian is the only person in the world who has a right to be happy."

All at once she paused. A softened note crept into her voice as she added, "I am sorry you feel as you do about us—about Christians. I wish you understood from your own experience how happy we are."

"I wish I did. Perhaps I will some day. But I only came out for a little chat, and to bid you good-bye. I take the six-thirty train to-night."

As he spoke Gordon arose and extended his hand.

"I shall never forget what you have said this afternoon," he remarked, as he pressed her fingers a moment in his strong clasp. "I hope I shall be a better man for your words."

He was gone before Floy could utter a word.

She never knew that Sidney Gordon had come to the ranche that evening with the intention of telling her that he loved her. Her frank and fearless words had so shown him the baseness of his life that his aroused soul had whispered, "You are not worthy to love such a girl as she. It would be sacrilege for you to touch her hand, except as a friend."

He heeded the voice of his nobler nature, and as he left her presence he determined to live a purer life than ever before.

Alas! How many men have thus resolved, and have again drifted into the cess-pool of sin, as did he, because they have not anchored themselves to the only One who has power to free them from pollution, and also the power to keep them free.

When Stuart Holcombe next visited the ranche, Floy was surprised to find that her eyes dwelt upon his face with a pleasure altogether new and unexpected.

Not only was this true, but she found herself mentally contrasting his whole make-up with that of Sidney Gordon; and the latter suffered because of this comparison.

She was so surprised by this revelation to her-

self of her altered attitude toward each of the young men, that a gentle quietness stole over her that was as new as it was captivating.

This led Stuart to converse with her with more freedom than had ever yet marked their intercourse, and before either one was aware of what was taking place they were exchanging views upon subjects which, until that moment, each had kept locked within the portal of the heart as too sacred to tell to another.

This call of Stuart's was a prolonged one, and when he at length rode homeward he knew beyond a doubt that he loved Florence Fielding as a man loves the one woman in the world he desires to make his wife.

And Floy stole into her chamber that night so changed from the usual merry, careless-hearted girl who entered there, that she went to the mirror and whispered to the face she saw reflected therefrom, "Is this really Floy Fielding, or is it some one masquerading under her name?"

The following morning found her as merry-hearted as ever, and rather inclined to amuse herself over the unique conversation of the previous evening; yet she shrank from telling her mother about it, saying to herself, "She would wonder whatever made me so silly as to speak

of those things to a man who is so nearly a stranger as Mr. Holcombe."

As this explanation of her unusual reticence satisfied her own heart, we will leave her without trying to probe more deeply into her inner life and motives.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SARAH GRANT'S PLOT AND THE RESULT.

AS spring advanced Helen Holcombe's strength did not return. Instead, it seemed to the loving eyes watching her that the vital life grew still fainter.

She steadily refused to see a physician, averring that she was not sick.

"I am languid, I admit. But there is no disease about me. Wait, and when summer roses come, I shall grow strong. You know how I love the roses, and the long, sweet days of June."

So Stuart yielded, although his uneasiness deepened with every passing day.

"Where is your friend, Dr. Traver?" Sarah Grant asked him one morning, when she and Stuart were alone together at the breakfast table. Helen, as was often the case these days, did not care for breakfast. "If only he would happen to come to Washington on another visit he might find out what Helen's trouble is without her knowing anything about it."

Stuart's eyes brightened.

"I wonder I hadn't thought of that before," was his response. "Lynne would come in a minute if he knew Helen was sick, for they were always the best of friends."

"Why not write him then, and tell him how uneasy we are about her, and invite him to visit us?"

Sarah's face was as innocent as though she had not lain awake half the previous night planning just how to bring about this longed-for visit.

"Cousin Sarah, you are a jewel," was Stuart's smiling answer. "I have known this for a long time," he added, mischievously, for he knew how she disliked to be praised; "but it comes over me with fresh power this morning." Then he added, as he arose from the table, "I will write Lynne the first thing when I get to the office. This is Tuesday. Unless something special detains him, he can be with us by Saturday."

He turned to leave the room, but paused to say, "How could we manage without you, Cousin Sarah? God was indeed good to us when he brought you under this roof. I have the feeling that Lynne will know exactly what Helen's ailment is, and that she will soon be as strong as ever."

"So have I," was his cousin's emphatic remark, as the door closed behind his stalwart form. "If you hadn't been as blind as men proverbially are, you would have guessed the truth long ago," she added, as she glanced from the window and watched him pass down the walk to the front gate.

Stuart dispatched his letter that very morning, telling Dr. Traver of Helen's declining health, and also of her wilful refusal to consult a physician. He added, "If you can take the time to run up to Washington for a visit, I believe you will be able to locate her trouble, and prescribe the remedies needed to restore her health and keep her with me; for, as dreadful as is the thought, I am afraid she is slipping away from me, and that unless she is soon helped it will be too late. If you can come, do so without delay; but do not let Helen know that I have written you. She must believe that your visit is made without any reference to her health, else she is wilful enough to refuse to see you after you have come."

This missive had the effect upon Dr. Traver that a bomb-shell has when exploded in a quiet neighborhood. Every faculty of his being was aroused to intensest life. His hand shook much as though he had suddenly been stricken with

palsy as he folded the letter, then opened it again and once more ran his eyes eagerly over the contents.

"I wonder when the next train goes north?" he murmured, looking around for his daily paper. He found it and turned to the timetable.

"Exactly at nine-thirty; and now it is eight-twenty. That is the train I must take."

The fit of trembling passed away as suddenly as it had mastered him. He sat down to write, saying, as he drew his paper into position, "Dr. Heath must look after my patients. I have no time to see him; but I can write out their names and send him the list."

He wrote rapidly for many minutes. Then he arose, selected such articles as he thought he would need, placed them in his valise, and was on the street hastening to the depot in less than half an hour from the first reading of Stuart's letter.

"I must see Ned a moment," he murmured, as he paused in front of the Walton mansion. His hasty ring brought Ned himself to the door.

"I thought the house was on fire, sure, from the way the bell jingled," the latter remarked, as he saw who the caller was; "so I dared not

wait for James to answer it. James is too dignified for haste."

"Get your hat, Ned, and come to the depot with me. I take the nine-thirty train north," the doctor said as soon as his friend's volubility gave him a chance to speak. "Don't wait to ask questions. We can talk as we go along."

"All right," was Ned's answer, as he took hat and gloves from the rack. He stepped back to say to his cousin, whose face peered out from the drawing-room door, "Don't let them wait for me, Marcia. I will join you later at the hall. Dr. Traver wants me to go to the depot with him."

Marcia Rivers stepped quickly into the hall. She was clad in a rich evening dress, and never had she looked fairer.

But Dr. Traver did not notice this fact. He merely bowed and passed swiftly down the steps into the street. Ned Hunter glanced back, and his eyes kindled as he saw her winsomeness.

"Bye-bye," he called, as he followed his friend. "Be sure and keep my place for me."

"Now tell me what this means," he said, as he joined his friend. "I saw you at six o'clock this evening, and you had no more idea of going off on this trip than I have of going to the

moon. What has changed your plans so suddenly?"

"A letter from Stuart Holcombe. He writes that Helen is very sick. He wants me to see her at once."

Ned's face became grave. "I am sorry to hear that," he said. "Should anything happen to Helen, Stuart would take it awfully hard. Did he say what was the trouble?" Ned was an old friend of the Holcombe's.

"No; some obscure ailment. And now, Ned, there are several things I want you to look after for me."

He detailed his wishes, and Ned promised to attend to them.

"Let me hear from you as soon as you reach Tacoma," the latter said, as the young physician stepped on board the train. "I shall be anxious until I hear that Helen is better."

Dr. Traver nodded, waved his hand, and the train rolled out of the depot.

They were anxious hours that intervened between his leaving Portland and reaching Tacoma.

But the journey was at length made, and the physician, grip in hand, reached the front gate of the Holcombe residence just as Stuart came out of the house on his way to the office.

The meeting between the two young men was cordial in the extreme. Stuart did not wait for his friend to enquire after the invalid's condition, but quickly said, "There is no change in Helen; but I believe your coming is the signal for her recovery."

"May I have ten minutes' private conversation with you before I see her?" Dr. Traver said, as Stuart turned to lead the way into the house.

"Certainly," was the surprised response. "I will take you at once into my own room."

He did so with no further delay than the encountering of Sarah Grant in the hall and the physician's cordial welcome by her necessitated.

"Is Helen engaged to Rodney Jackson?" was the question which broke from Lynne Traver's lips the moment the door shut Stuart and himself in from chance of interruption.

"No, indeed. What made you think of such a thing?" was the latter's reply.

His friend proceeded to tell him some facts connected with the young physician's former visit to Washington that threw light on many things which had hitherto puzzled him.

A half hour passed in earnest conversation between them. Then Stuart arose, saying, "Make yourself at home in this room. Cousin Sarah will have yours ready for you after you

have seen Helen. I must go down to the office now."

"If Miss Grant has not already told Helen of my arrival, ask her not to mention my name. Merely say that an old friend wants to see her," was the doctor's request, as Stuart passed through the door.

Thus it happened that fifteen minutes later, when Dr. Traver was told by Sarah that he could now enter the room where Helen was sitting, the latter had no conception as to who the visitor was to be, beyond the fact that it was an old acquaintance. Sarah had not even told her that it was a friend.

She raised her eyes, therefore, with some degree of curiosity in their depths as the door opened. Dr. Traver did not linger to note the agitated start as she saw who it was that confronted her, but hastened to her side, saying, "Helen, I could not stay away from you longer. Are you glad to see me?"

Her cheeks, which had flushed to crimson as she recognized him, now grew as white as the lace at her throat. She did not speak, but something in her eyes emboldened the young man to take both her slender hands in his strong clasp. She did not withdraw them. He bent and kissed first one and then the other. Then he

said, "These are the hands of my bride. Unless you bid me go, Helen, I shall never part from you again. When I leave Tacoma you will accompany me as my wife. The misunderstanding between us has almost wrecked our lives. I cannot risk its being repeated."

Still she did not utter a word. He knelt beside her and looked into her eyes. They were luminous with joy.

"Am I to go or stay?" he questioned.

"You are to stay," was her answer.

Dr. Traver was satisfied.

There is little need of writing more about these two young people. Helen's health began at once to improve, as Sarah Grant had shrewdly felt would be the case when she moved upon Stuart to send for Dr. Traver to visit them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO PATHS MERGED INTO ONE.

TWO days after Dr. Traver's arrival in Tacoma the weather so far departed from its usual balmy April mood as to change into a chill north-east storm. The rain froze as it fell, and soon the sidewalks were like burnished glass.

A pedestrian, who was walking rapidly toward the Holcombe home, suddenly slipped on the polished surface, and before he could regain his footing measured his length on the sidewalk. The unfortunate person was no other than Rodney Jackson.

With an exclamation of disgust he attempted to rise, but found himself unable to do so.

"This is a pretty go," he soliloquized. "I have sprained my leg so that I am literally unable to stand on my feet; and to-night was to have seen me on my way to Mexico."

As he heard the sound of approaching footsteps he again made a desperate attempt to rise, but with no better success than before.

"Hallo, Jackson! Trying to find out the width of our front pavement?"

It was Stuart Holcombe who spoke. The next instant he saw the expression of pain on the doughty scientist's face and added, "I beg your pardon. I had no idea you were hurt. Let me help you."

But even with his aid Jackson was unable to regain his feet.

"Wait a moment. Lynne Traver is in the house. We will have you by the fire in short order. This rain is chilling you to the marrow."

In spite of Jackson's protest that he would soon be able to walk, Stuart called to Lynne, and the two bore the injured man into Helen's cosy sitting-room, where a cheery fire was blazing.

Jackson's chagrin over his mishap was expressed even more strongly in his countenance than by his words.

"In all my life of wandering and adventure this is the first time such an accident ever occurred to me. And to think it should have come when I was in about the safest place to be found in Washington---on the level space in front of your home---is most extraordinary."

As he spoke he glanced into Helen's sympathetic face.

"I am glad you were exactly where you were, so long as the accident had to come," was Stuart's cheery answer. "We shall now have the pleasure of your society for a longer period than you would otherwise have granted it; and Dr. Traver can attend to the sprain without the bother of your calling in a stranger. So you see how nicely it was all arranged."

"Yes, we are truly glad to have you with us," Helen added, gently. She was so happy in the society of her restored lover, that her heart went out in tender sympathy toward the man who was the unconscious cause of all her suffering, and who had once told her that he loved her.

At a word from Dr. Traver she left the room to see if Sarah had plenty of hot water on the range. While she was gone the injured limb was examined, and found to be not only sprained, but fractured.

After the first moment of chagrin was over, Jackson resigned himself to the inevitable with the docility of a child. When he was at length placed on a couch in a sunny apartment that opened into the cheery sitting-room where Helen spent the most of her time, he was as smiling as his condition of suffering would permit.

Dr. Traver attended to the injured limb with

a quietness and promptness that showed him a master of his profession, and after a time the pain lessened to such an extent as to allow Jackson to enter into conversation with the physician.

They were old acquaintances, and each had a cordial liking for the other.

Rodney Jackson's keen eyes did not often miss taking in facts less palpable than the change which had been wrought in Helen Holcombe since he had last met her; nor did it take him long to ascertain the cause of the alteration. The tender softness of her glance as it rested on the smiling face of Dr. Traver was more expressive to an acute observer than the young lady was aware.

Thus it chanced, before twenty-four hours had passed, that the new member of the Holcombe household was as certain of the relation existing between the girl he loved and Dr. Traver as were the parties themselves.

If the knowledge of the engagement gave him pain, he did not betray the fact.

Sarah Grant's sympathetic heart guessed that the joy now so apparent in Helen would pierce with grief the man whom she had long known loved the winsome girl with all the ardor of his intense nature. She therefore relaxed from her

usual reserved bearing, and made it a part of every day's duty in every possible way to cheer and divert the young man's attention from the happy lovers, whose overflowing hearts could not conceal their joy in being together.

Day by day Jackson's noble and unselfish nature rose to meet and defeat his sense of pain in having failed to win the love of the girl he had coveted for his wife for four long years. He became so far successful in this as to be able to note with pleasure the swift change from invalidism to health which was hourly being wrought in Helen. And he once and forever put away his love for her, and welcomed the man who had the power by his presence thus to bring the light of joy into her eyes, and restore the hue of health to her cheeks.

Very busy were the days that followed the injured man's entry into the cheery home, for Dr. Traver would not relinquish his purpose that Helen was to accompany him as his wife when he returned to Portland. A capable woman was therefore installed in the kitchen to leave Sarah Grant free to superintend the making of Helen's trousseau. A deft sempstress was also employed, and it was not long before Rodney Jackson's alert mind fully grasped the situation.

"Why can't you bring your sewing in here,"

he said to Sarah one day. "I love to look at pretty things, and I need you to talk to. Stuart's time has to be given to his office, and Miss Holcombe and Dr. Traver so often forget that there is any one else in the world but themselves, that time hangs heavy on my hands."

"Why, of course, if you don't mind the litter in the room, I shall be glad to sit with you while I sew," was Sarah's quick response.

So it came to be a daily thing for Sarah to sit in Rodney's room while her deft fingers fashioned the various dainty articles her loving heart prompted her to make for her cherished cousin. And Jackson soon formed the habit of reading aloud to her from the various books which Stuart kept beside his couch, such passages as struck him as especially fine.

In this way he soon learned to know more of Sarah's inner life than any one had ever previously been able to fathom. He experienced a keen delight in suddenly raising his eyes to her's, when some particularly noble thought had been read aloud by him, and encountering the magnetic glow which betrayed the responsiveness of her soul to the thought expressed by his author.

The third week rolled away before he was able to touch his foot to the floor. As soon as he

found he could be moved, he proposed going to his boarding house.

"No. You are to remain right here until you are able to be at work," was Stuart's prompt reply. He would listen to nothing else, and as Jackson heartily detested the thought of the dreary life awaiting his return to his lonely room, he gratefully acquiesced in his friend's decision.

"There is to be a quiet wedding in the drawing-room next Tuesday," Stuart continued, when the matter of Jackson's stay had been dismissed. "You must try to get well enough to join us. We all feel that the circle will not be complete without you."

A sudden moisture dimmed his companion's eyes. "How kind you all are to me," he said. "You are spoiling me for the lonely life that stretches ahead." Then he smiled as he said, in his usual cheery way, "But I will take 'the good the gods provide,' and let the future take care of itself."

"A sensible decision. See that you carry it out. Ah! here comes Cousin Sarah with one of her steaming dishes. I see she is coddling you in the same outrageous way she coddles me when I fancy I am a bit under the weather. Talk of our spoiling you! She is the one who

does the spoiling in this house, and not one of us can escape her process."

Stuart laughed as he spoke, and laughed again as he noted the becoming flush which dyed Sarah's cheek as she caught the words he had spoken.

The marriage was delightfully simple, as Helen expressed a dislike for all the fuss and show which usually accompany such an occasion. The bride was lovely in her robes of dainty white, and no one who looked into her radiant face could doubt her happiness. If Dr. Traver's was more grave, it was not less joyful, and Stuart remarked to Jackson that they were the most supremely happy-looking couple he had ever been permitted to look upon.

Few guests were invited. Floy Fielding and Edgar, with the Henderson household, being the only ones with whom the reader is familiar.

By using a crutch Jackson was enabled to be present, and he was as much interested in watching Sarah Grant as he was in noting the blissful countenance of the bride and groom.

Never had Sarah looked so regally handsome as on this night. Deep down in her consciousness rested the pleasing thought that it was through her shrewd, though innocent plotting, that Helen's great happiness had come to her.

This thought lent a happy lustre to her eyes. She also felt that the responsibility of the occasion rested primarily upon her shoulders, and that upon her more than on any other devolved the task of seeing that no "hitch" marred the smoothness of the evening. Her demeanor, therefore, was both dignified and gracious, and Jackson was not the only one who directed glances of admiration in her direction.

Many long letters had Dr. Traver written to Ned Hunter during the weeks the young physician lingered in Washington—letters of instruction about many matters in which the business man was to act in behalf of his absent friend.

Marcia Rivers was told of the pending marriage, and if her vanity received a prick as she realized that her charms had made no impression on the busy physician's heart, she was too genuinely sweet and amiable to allow the knowledge to depress her. She became Ned's "right hand," as he expressed it, in fitting up Dr. Traver's handsome suite of rooms in a manner befitting the coming of the bride.

Dr. Traver was an orphan, his father having died when he was an infant. Mrs. Traver, to whom the young physician was devoted, had passed away suddenly the year the latter had settled in Portland.

There were, therefore, no near relatives to do for him what his friend was now accomplishing with much pleasure and pride, assisted by the piquant Marcia, and sometimes, when especially important matters were under consideration, by Mrs. Rivers also.

When the young couple reached Portland the inmates of the Walton mansion received them with all the enthusiasm and affection of close kinsfolk. This was as unexpected as it was pleasing to Dr. Traver, and caused Helen to feel that, instead of coming among strangers, she was being introduced into a circle of loving and intimate friends whom she had always known. Ned Hunter, being a friend of her early girlhood, greeted her with almost the warmth of a brother.

Even Ross Rivers caught the general spirit of good fellowship, and vied with Ned in devising ways in which to shower attentions on the happy couple. He was so far successful that Helen, not suspecting his former attitude of criticism toward her husband, deemed him one of her most intimate friends.

The weeks sped into months, each day, for Helen, turning upon hinges of gold. The only drawback to her happiness was the thought of her brother's loneliness; but, as Sarah had been

forced to give up her duties in the kitchen while the preparations for the marriage were in progress, Stuart took advantage of this fact to insist that she should not return into that domain of drudgery.

"I need you to fill Helen's place in the house," he urged, with much adroitness. "You cannot do this if the culinary department again rests on your shoulders. Helen's flowers will need your attention, and so shall I. Who will have the leisure to read my favorite authors with me, or listen to my prosing, when I am in a particularly talkative mood, unless you are free and fresh for those onerous duties?"

So Sarah at last yielded the point, much to her cousin's satisfaction, as well as to Rodney Jackson's secret elation. As the latter became more intimately acquainted with the innate refinement, and many noble qualities of the sturdy western woman's character, he had inwardly chafed at her position in the Holcombe household. While he knew, through Helen, that it was by choice she filled it, yet its incongruity chafed him.

When Helen learned that Sarah was now free to devote her time as exclusively to Stuart as she might desire, she felt less oppressed by a sense of his loneliness.

"He seems to have no idea of marriage," she confided to her husband. "I hoped for a long time that he and Florence Fielding might fancy each other; but Floy seems fascinated by a Mr. Gordon, who has been visiting Tacoma for the past six months."

"I recall the name. Rodney Jackson spoke of him several times. He must be a fine fellow," Dr. Traver responded.

"He is; but he is not the man to make Floy happy. I was hoping her eyes might be opened to see what a noble fellow Stuart is—so superior to Mr. Gordon—the night of the wedding. He thought of every one's comfort and pleasure, and made such a charming host that I felt more pride in him than ever."

"I did not know my sweetheart had eyes for any one on that evening but myself," was her husband's laughing response to these words.

"You were very much mistaken then, for I noticed everybody present," Helen answered, bridling a little in her assured happiness. "I never saw Cousin Sarah look so well as she did that night; and Floy was more charming than usual, although Stuart did not seem to know that she was in the house."

Had her brother heard these words they would have filled him with intense surprise. He had

been so supremely conscious of Florence Fielding's presence on the occasion in question that it was with difficulty he had been able to turn his gaze away from her.

Helen continued, in a satisfied tone, "I am sure Cousin Sarah will never marry, so Stuart will always have her to make his home bright and cheery for him. The right kind of a wife would suit him much better, of course, but he seems bent on being a bachelor."

Which prognostication was about as wise as such prognostications usually are.

But as girls are given to reading their brothers with about as much accuracy as Helen was now reading her's, her opinion need not surprise us.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FISHERMAN.

SIDNEY GORDON was returning home on the street-car at a late hour of the night. He was tired, excited, and unstrung.

It was in the height of the political campaign, and he had entered into politics with all the fervor of a highly-strung, ardent temperament.

The only other occupant of the car was a young man of about his own age, whose pleasing face and bearing attracted Sidney the moment he entered the car.

"That fellow's life is a clean one, or I can't read faces," he thought, scanning the noble countenance before him. "I wish some of my opponents were built like that. It would not be such mean business fighting them."

He turned impatiently to the window to see how near he was to the street where he wished to leave the car. In doing so he dropped his glove.

"Excuse me," and as he spoke the pleasant-faced stranger laid the glove on Sidney's knee.

Gordon was glad of an excuse to enter into conversation, and soon he was unburdening his heart of many things of which he desired to speak to some attentive listener. The stranger met his advances with frank pleasure.

"If I had known into what a cess-pool of uncleanness a political life would plunge me, I would have thought twice before I embarked. It is wine, whiskey, lies and late hours without end. I am tired of it all."

Sidney had been partaking quite freely of wine during the evening, else he would not have spoken thus candidly to an utter stranger. But something in the face opposite him attracted him strongly, and he felt an undefined conviction that his words were of interest to the young man who listened so attentively as he spoke.

"Why not draw out?" suggested his companion.

"Too late. I have got to see my party through. If I do not, I will be branded as a coward and changeling."

"Would not that be better than be branded something worse?"

Sidney looked inquiringly into the earnest eyes opposite. He did not catch the speaker's thought.

"Bad habits indulged in are apt not only to

brand, but to land a man on a lower plane than changeling or coward could do," the young man explained, with a smile. "When once formed, their grip is relentless, and their tendency always downward."

Sidney frowned. "There is no danger for me. I am not afraid of the future. It is merely the present associations that ruffle me. I can easily shake myself loose when the election is over."

He began to button his coat preparatory to leaving the car.

"I suppose," he said, hesitatingly, "that you are not a dabbler in politics. Will you excuse me if I inquire what your profession is?"

"My present occupation is that of a fisherman," the stranger quietly replied.

Sidney looked the surprise he felt at this answer, but politeness kept him silent. He drew a card from his pocket and presented it to the young man, saying, "I have enjoyed our conversation. Perhaps, sometime, we may meet again. I hope so."

The stranger, with a pleased smile, read Gordon's name and address, and then responded, "I cannot return your courtesy by giving you my card, but here is something you may like to look over when you have leisure. My name is Traver."

As he spoke Dr. Traver, for it was he, placed a delicately tinted leaflet in Sidney's hand. The next moment the car stopped, and the latter, with a bow, passed out.

When alone in his cosy room Gordon examined the bit of dainty paper the young stranger had given him. Upon it was printed in large, clear type these texts of Scripture: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.) "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

He thoughtfully read the texts over twice, then put the leaflet into his vest pocket as he muttered, "That fellow is no hypocrite. He has the genuine stamp, the same as Stuart Holcombe. He is a clean-hearted, noble young man. I wonder if it is his religion that has kept him so? If he were placed just where I am, what would he do? Not what I am doing. I am sure of that. I suppose a man could be in politics and yet keep himself clean. Men have done it; but I am sure I cannot. If Arthur and Cousin Annie dreamed where I stand to-night, morally considered, they wouldn't feel so proud of my political success as they do. I am glad they do not know anything more about me than they do."

He sighed, poked his fire, and again spoke aloud, "Well, when the elections are over I will turn over a new leaf. Yes, and I will hunt up that young man and get him to tell me something about his life. His influence will be good, and I am sure I shall need some such influence after I have gone on with the set I am now in for a few weeks longer."

Something in his soul, which had been aroused to momentary life by the verses he had read on the leaflet, now became quiet. Well satisfied, he again said, "Yes, I will entirely break loose from my present associates just as soon as the votes are in. I cannot afford to go on this way much longer."

An almost audible voice seemed to whisper to him, "You are all right. A man who can make a resolution like that in the face of all the temptations that surround you is a fine fellow. No danger for you. You are safe enough."

He stretched himself, took up a book, but laid it down without opening it. Again he began to muse.

"After I have broken with the set I am now in, and cleaned up a bit, I will write to Miss Fielding. I haven't dared think of her for weeks. It seems like sacrilege for me even to breathe her name with the rotten things about



"CANADA CREEK," NEAR CARBON RIVER.

me that I know are in my life; but that will all be changed when the elections are over."

The iteration of this resolution so cheered him that he was enabled to pass a pleasant hour over a magazine he found had been laid on his table during his absence from his room for the past two days.

Three weeks after the elections were over Gordon again entered his room at a late hour of the night. He had been absent five days, "off on a lark," as he expressed it, with some of the friends he had made during the campaign.

"This life does not pay," he said, as he looked into his cheerless grate and then down at his dusty clothing and soiled linen. "I have got a miserable headache; and I feel as dirty as a beggar. I will take a bath. The bath-room is always warm, and a hot bath and clean clothes will make a new man of me."

He carried his thought into immediate execution, and when he emerged from the bath-room he murmured, "How nice it is to feel clean. Now I can again count myself respectable."

As he stood in his dressing-gown preparing to retire, he took up his vest and said, with a light laugh, "I'll have a look at that picture Clinton gave me before I get into bed."

He drew out one of those suggestive photographs which have helped to lead so many thousand young men down the path to ruin.

But before he studied its points of sensuous beauty, he stooped to pick up something that had fallen to the floor as he had taken the picture from his pocket.

It was a delicately tinted leaflet.

"Pshaw! I wonder why I have not burned that long ago," he muttered. But, in spite of himself, his eyes read over the words, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

"I've half a mind to toss it in the grate to kindle the fire with," he said, aloud. Instead, he again read it over. The air of his room was cold, but he did not heed it.

At last he turned toward his bed. As he did so the photograph, which he had forgotten, met his gaze. He took it up in a kind of fury, and, without pausing to glance upon it, tore it into bits. Then he tossed the fragments into the grate, extinguished his light, and got into bed.

But it was long before sleep came to him. Something within him kept saying, "If a bath

makes the body feel so comfortable, how nice it would be to know that the soul was as clean."

And then the last text on the leaflet came distinctly before his mind, and he repeated it aloud, pausing for an instant after each word.

"The—blood—of—Jesus—Christ—his—Son—cleanseth—us—from—all—sin."

"What if I could truthfully read it this way," he murmured: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth ME from all sin? Oh! what a different world this would be. Sin! sin! How awful it is. I never thus felt its hideous blackness before. How I am steeped in it! How impossible it seems to get rid of it. Great God, have mercy upon me!"

The next morning he arose feeling depressed and miserable.

He spent a wretched day. Do what he would, these words kept ringing over and over through his soul, "The wages of sin is death! The wages of sin is death!"

"And I have surely earned my wages," he muttered to himself, grimly. "No doubt of that. I would like to stop, to change, but I have no strength. My sins are too strong for me. It is just as that young fisherman said. Let evil habits once get a grip, and their grasp is relentless."

At length he wandered into a church. He wanted help, and he vaguely felt he might find it there. It was Wednesday night, and, as he entered, the choir was singing a beautiful chant. Then the minister arose and delivered an eloquent lecture upon the divine in nature, taking for his text the first verse of the nineteenth Psalm.

It was a beautiful talk, and the prayer that followed it was faultless; but Sidney had received no help.

He lingered a few minutes after the benediction was pronounced, but at first no one noticed him. Then a handsomely-dressed gentleman held out his hand and said, "Glad to see you. Come in again. We have the most eloquent man in the city. He delivers a course of lectures on the Holy Land soon. They are going to be popular. Come out and hear them."

Sidney murmured a word of thanks and turned away.

"Pshaw! They are all alike. There is no real religion in the world these days. Miss Fielding and Holcombe, yes, and that young fisherman, must have absorbed all there was afloat," he said to himself, as he wended his way down the street toward the resort of his comrades. "I was a fool to think there was any-

thing in that line for me. A glass of champagne will kill these horrible fancies. Then I will be all right again."

For the next four weeks he went more deeply into the ways of death than ever before. He was wretched. His soul seemed on fire. He strove to drown the voice within him, which was ever saying, "The wages of sin is death." And again, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. It can cleanse you, even you."

"How? How?" he would ask, in anguish of soul. "I am too black to be cleansed. Some men might be, but I have gone too far. If I had drawn out when that fisherman warned me, there might have been a chance. Now it is too late."

It seemed as if he could hear a voice jeeringly say, "Too late! Too late! Too late!"

Christmas morning dawned. In his misery he said, "I will go to the Cathedral. Perhaps I will find there some help for this awful pain in my soul."

He went. The music was grand, but no word of light or healing came to his burdened heart. He looked around upon the worshippers and said to himself, "They are no better than I. Religion is all a lie."

Late in the afternoon he started to join some

companions for another night of revelry. He felt that he must plunge into something exciting enough to drown the voices that were making such discord in his soul, or he would soon become insane.

As he went down the street he passed the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association. Upon the steps stood his friend of the street-car, Dr. Traver.

"I was just thinking about you," the latter said, with a smile; "and I was half expecting you. Come in, won't you? I have wanted to see you ever since that night we met on the street-car. Had not business pressed, I should have hunted you up."

Again Gordon felt the charm of the other's presence as he had felt it in the car. Without a word he took his extended hand and turned with him into the building.

Never did he forget that service. Dr. Traver led it. Not more than fifteen young men were present, but all were attentive and earnest. Such impressive prayers as went up from their lips Sidney had never before heard. As the last song was sung and the young men separated, it seemed to him that God's holy presence really filled the room.

Dr. Traver came to him and laid his hand on

his shoulder. Sidney had not risen with the rest. He seemed to feel a strange spell over him. A reluctance to go out of the room held him in his seat. The physician bent over him, saying, "Christ is seeking you. He has laid you on my heart ever since that night in the car. Day and night I have been calling on him for your soul. Will you kneel with me here and join with me in prayer?"

As he fell upon his knees a great cry came from Sidney Gordon's soul. It was the same that had come from him that night when he first saw the awful nature of sin. "Great God, have mercy on me."

An hour and a half later, when he stood upon his feet, the peace of heaven was on his face. The blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed his soul from all conscious sin.

"God has made me a fisher of men," Dr. Traver explained to Sidney later, when they had passed a quiet hour in the latter's cosy room and were about to separate. "I am a physician, but my real business, the one that engrosses my deepest thought and interest, is that of a fisherman."

"You have caught your fish this time," Gordon said, with a happy laugh and with moist eyes. And he added, with a wonderful light

breaking over his face, "How blessed it is to be able to say, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me, even me, from all sin.' "

Dr. Traver had happy news to tell Helen that night.

When Gordon learned that Stuart Holcombe's sister, whom he had known in Tacoma, was now the young physician's wife, he promised to make her an early call.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PRICE OF A SOUL.

A LOVELY babe came to bless and brighten Hallock Miller's home. The young husband and father felt that his cup of happiness almost brimmed over.

"I count every moment I am away from you and the boy as lost time," he said one evening, as he took the child in his arms and bent to kiss Edith's smiling lips.

"I often wonder if wife and babe were ever so loved before as you love Robbie and me," Edith responded, as she nestled against his arm.

He gazed gravely yet tenderly into her face as he said, "You two are my all in all. Some men divide their love between wife and children and God. Mine is undivided. You and the boy have it all." Then he added, "Of course mother has a share."

A slight shiver passed over Edith as she listened to his words. Experience had taught her how useless it was to press God's claims upon him, yet she timidly said, "It is God who gives

you your wife and child. Does not this call for love and gratitude?"

"If so, I do not respond to the call," he quickly answered. There was a moment's silence before he added, "Jack Collier buried his wife yesterday. Was it God's love that took her away from him?"

Edith opened her lips to reply, but Hallock interrupted her, "I know what you will say; but it will not change my opinion, so you need not trouble to say it. Do you know," he continued, passionately, "that one reason I cannot bear to be absent from you is, I fear God may snatch you from me? I would not want to live an hour if you and the boy were taken from me."

His wife sighed. Again the gentle whisper came to her soul: "Such love as exists between you is idolatry."

For a moment she wavered. She really did want to love God supremely, but did she want her husband to love her less passionately than he did? Could she be happy with a less intense devotion than he lavished upon her?

She did not answer these questions, except to lay her cheek against his hand and murmur,

"Only God knows how precious your love is to me, Hallock. Should you ever change—should your love grow cold, or should you return to your wild ways—I am sure it would kill me."

Her eyes were moist with tears, although a tremulous smile came to her lips as she continued, after a moment of thoughtful silence, "Should either of these terrible things ever happen, the kindest thing you could do would be to kill me before I found out the truth."

He laughed lightly as he noted her tearful eyes, and said, "A better way would be for me to kill myself. But banish such thoughts, darling. As well expect the moon to drop from the skies as that my love for you can change, or my old habits ever again master me."

Enjoying the society of his wife and child as he did, it was a severe cross to him when, a few days after Christmas, he received a business call which necessitated his being away from home for several days.

"But I can get through and be back by New Year's eve," he said, cheerily. "It would be dreadful not to spend that day at home."

"Yes, indeed, for mother and I have planned to have a fine plum-pudding for dinner; and it will not be worth having unless you can enjoy it with us," was Edith's response.

"All right. Put my name in it in big capitals, and I will be sure and be on hand," Hallock said, with a pleased laugh. Edith's skill in the culinary line was marked, and Hallock

felt much pride in this fact. Then he added, musingly, "The Verners live in Fair-haven, where I am going. They are old friends of mine. I will look them up and tell them what a bonny wife and boy I have. It will make my stay from home less forlorn."

His preparations were soon made, and with tender adieus he turned from the little home which was his earthly paradise.

He looked back, and the pretty picture of Edith standing in the doorway, with the boy in her arms, and his mother behind her smilingly waving her hand to him, almost tempted him to return.

"I must not be a fool," he murmured, and, throwing half a dozen kisses to the little group, he hastened down the street.

His business was almost completed in Fair-haven, and he was expecting to take the evening train for home without his having found time to look up his old friends. A "cold wave" had unceremoniously made its appearance, and Hallock shivered as he buttoned his heavy coat more closely about him and thought, as he turned down the street to attend to the last item of the business which had brought him from Tacoma: "How cosy the home-nest will look to me after this dreary absence, with Edith and

the boy sitting before the glowing fire. I am so glad I got that handsome Franklin, in spite of mother's protest that it was too expensive. Edith will find it just the thing during this cold snap. Jack Frost will not be able to poke his impudent nose anywhere within the circle of its far-reaching influence. I am sure of that."

The wind had risen, and as Hallock turned and saw the car coming, he decided to board it.

"I don't so much mind a cold snap if the wind is quiet," he mused, as he waited a moment for the car to approach. "Ugh! That blast seemed to go right through me."

He was glad to have the protection of the car, even though he found no vacant seat. As he caught at a strap to keep himself steady, a pleased voice exclaimed, "How are you, Hal? Glad to see you in Fair-haven."

A swift glance disclosed to him the fact that his friend, Harvey Verner, occupied the seat immediately in front of where he was standing.

Cordial greetings were exchanged, Mr. Verner rising as they shook hands.

"Take my seat," the young man urged. "I am sorry our city was so churlish as to refuse one to such a stranger as are you. When did you come?"

Hallock declined the proffered courtesy, and explained his hurried trip.

"Come and dine with us. Our hour is six o'clock sharp," were Mr. Verner's words, as he prepared to leave the car.

"But I must take the night train for home. To-morrow is the first day of the New Year, you know, and I must be back," Hallock replied.

"All right. We will get you off in time. Be sure and come. Mother will be delighted to see you."

So at the appointed hour for dinner Hallock was with his old friends.

They, like himself, were from Oregon. Mrs. Verner and Mrs. Miller had been school girls together, and at one time the intimacy between their families had been close. Hallock had not seen them since the first year of his residence in Washington.

"This remarkably cold weather almost dampens my ardor for the Washington climate," he remarked, as he drew close to the fire.

"But it is so unusual one can afford to forgive its unfriendly mood," was Mrs. Verner's response.

Her guest shrugged his shoulders as he said, "But the same mood was manifested in April.

Do you recall that freezing snap which injured the fruit? Until this year I have deemed the climate perfect."

Dinner was now announced, and no further comment on the weather was made until Harvey Verner said, as he reached for the delicate glass by his friend's plate, "You will take wine, of course."

Seeing hesitation on her guest's face, Mrs. Verner hastened to say, "It is home-made, and therefore harmless. It will be good for you, especially as you are going to travel this cold night."

Thus urged, Hallock took the wine. Home made or not, it had the old flavor he so well remembered. A new light came into his eyes, and merry anecdotes fell from his lips with a freshness and spontaneity that charmed his friends.

He told them of his home, his wife and boy, and painted his happiness in such glowing terms that his friend said, with a laugh, "You almost persuade me, Hal, to become a Benedict myself."

As he spoke he reached for Hallock's empty glass and again filled it with the sparkling liquid.

"If you could find an Edith, I should urge you to go ahead; but I warn you that only one woman is run in her mould. When you know

her you will admit I am right," was the reply, as Hallock drained the wine at one draught, and arose from the table, saying it was time for him to be off, lest he lose his train.

His pulses were bounding with an unnatural life as he bade his friends good-bye and walked rapidly down the street toward the depot.

"Mrs. Verner was right. I needed the wine to keep out this bitter cold," he thought, drawing his muffler more closely about his throat. "I wish I had taken another glass. How the wind does bite."

He was just opposite one of those gilded palaces of hell through whose portals myriads of young men annually drop into perdition.

The old thirst was upon him, although he suspected it not.

"I will step in and get one glass of champagne," he said. "It can't hurt me, and this cold is intense."

Need I go on? The reader guesses what followed. It is an old and oft-repeated story.

That glass of champagne awoke the fiend within him. He tossed off three glasses without pausing, and then, forgetting Edith and the boy—everything but the old lust and passion—he was ready for the gaming table, to which a polite youth, seeing the evidences of affluence in his appearance, cordially invited him.

Daylight saw him a ruined man. He had gambled all night. He lay for long hours in a drunken stupor, and at last, as the shadows of the New Year's day were closing about him, he roused to a sense of his degradation and ruin.

He had gambled away everything—his money, his watch, his handsome shirt-studs, and last and most awful truth of all, the large sum of money he had just collected for his employers.

As the full extent of his ruin dawned upon him, he groaned aloud. His mother, his wife and boy, were not only beggared, but disgraced, and this by the one they loved best on earth.

As he pictured his mother's face of sorrow, and Edith's heart-broken anguish, despair seized him.

He was in just the right condition for it to do its deadly work.

He looked about him. Some one had carried him, while insensible from drink, into a small room adjoining the gambling hall. Two other young men were beside him. Both were still in a drunken sleep.

Hallock saw the butt of a pistol protruding from the pocket of one of the sleepers. Instantly he drew it out and examined it. It was loaded.

With a groan he placed it against his forehead.

"I can face death, but not the despair of Edith and my mother," he said. "The kindest thing I can do for them is to rid them of my presence forever."

The next moment there was a report, and Hallock Miller's soul was in eternity.

The price of his soul had been a glass of wine offered him by a friend, and urged upon him by a professing Christian and a lady.

Is this a horrible chapter? The most horrible thing about it is its awful truth. It is being enacted, day by day, in some of its sad details, all about us. And yet men vote the saloon into existence, and God's people offer no practical protest.

We will draw a veil for a time over the anguish which the tragic events just narrated brought to the inmates of Hallock Miller's home.

Sympathetic friends did all that was possible, foremost among whom were Stuart Holcombe and Rodney Jackson. Both had loved the one who was gone, and would fain have brought comfort to hearts so sorely stricken.

But only One could do that, and for a time it seemed that even he was powerless to bind up the broken hearts and assuage their bitter grief.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BAFFLED.

DURING the weeks and months occupied and crowded with the events narrated in our later chapters, no clue had been obtained of the whereabouts of Nat Jones.

He had disappeared as absolutely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

Link after link in the evidence establishing Clay as the rightful inheritor of the Claymore estate had been searched out by Mr. Henderson and Stuart. Both felt certain that the boy was the missing heir, yet they needed the proof which Nat Jones alone could supply to prove this true. Not a word had been spoken to Clay about the matter which so absorbed the attention of his employers.

"There is no use in awakening a hope that may never be realized," was Mr. Henderson's thought, and Stuart fully agreed with him.

Clay was busy over his studies, the night school still engaging him. This, added to his duties in the office, left him scant space for the

many friendly calls which Oscar Henderson paid him. The petted youth felt that Clay owed his present position to the fact that he, Oscar Henderson, had used his influence with his father, and had thus opened the way to the introduction of the friendless boy into the lawyer's handsome office. If, because of this fact, he took more of Clay's time than the boy felt that he could well spare, the latter did not betray this feeling to his friend.

He was sincerely attached to him, and met him as his equal, in no wise showing that he felt the inferiority of his own position.

"Look here, Clay, how is it that you sometimes make me feel as though you were fortune's favorite and I the one at the foot of the ladder?" Oscar one evening remarked to him, as they sat together.

Clay looked at him thoughtfully as he replied, "I don't know, I am sure, unless it is because I am busy and you are idle. I should think idleness would cause a fellow to feel pretty worthless, no matter who he might be."

Oscar flushed at these plain words. Then he said, "But what can I do? I hate books, and mother persuaded father to let me drop college this year. I suppose I will have to knuckle down next fall, again."

"Why not take up stenography and type-writing?" Clay asked. "It is what I should love if I had the education and the time to master it."

Oscar stared. "What could I do after I learned it?"

"Become independent, for one thing. You don't know how much better you would feel to be doing something to support yourself, instead of depending on your father just as though you were a baby."

Clay spoke warmly, and again Oscar's face flushed.

"What has put such odd notions into your head?" he inquired.

"Are they odd? They seem to me the most natural thing in the world. They just came of themselves, because you seem so restless, and never know what to do with yourself. I have always had to work, so it seems dreadful to me to see a fellow living as you do."

This conversation led to speedy results. Oscar soon after told his father that he wanted to fit himself to become a reporter. As Mr. Henderson had given up the hope of his son ever following him in his own chosen profession, he welcomed Oscar's plan with much satisfaction. Thus it happened that the spoiled and petted

youth was soon plunged into the intricacies of those mysterious characters, to master which taxed his patience to its utmost tension.

Many times he would have abandoned the attempt in disgust had it not been for Clay's words of encouragement, and also for a feeling of pique that others in the class in which he had been placed were holding out steadfast and becoming victors when he was almost ready to accept defeat.

So he plodded along, gaining strength of character day by day as he persevered, and longing for the time when he should be able to put his newly-acquired accomplishment into successful and remunerative operation.

One day as he was sitting in his father's office testing his speed on the type-writer, Clay came in looking flushed and excited.

"What's the matter?" Oscar inquired, as he glanced up from his sheets of paper into the boy's face.

"I believe I have seen Nat Jones," Clay answered.

Mr. Henderson, who was at his desk, glanced sharply into the boy's face.

"Where?" he inquired.

"Down on H— street, where you sent me with those papers. I was just crossing the street

below the post-office, when a shambling figure came out of an alley just ahead of me. I am sure it was Nat. He looked back and saw me, and turned up the alley again as quick as a flash. I hurried on and went up the alley a little way, but no one was in sight."

Mr. Henderson at once notified the detective who was employed on the case of Clay's suspicions. Again the city was searched, with no further result than that a man answering to old Nat's description had been seen at several points during the past few days.

"This is the most baffling and annoying case I have ever had," the older lawyer confessed to his partner when the detective's lack of success was made known to him. "I sometimes wish I had never allowed myself to become interested in it. To feel sure the missing heir is right under my nose, and yet be unable to prove it, is certainly exasperating."

"The very fact of Jones' hiding as he is doing goes to prove that he holds information he is determined not to disclose," Stuart responded.

"He may have murdered Jennings for the money it was known the man possessed, and then have stolen the child," the elder man continued. "I have half a dozen theories about it. Either Jennings must be found, or Nat Jones, and that

before very long, else the estate will still revert to you and Helen."

"If Clay is the heir, as we believe, then he must be my cousin, twice removed," Stuart said, with a pleased smile. "Strange as it may seem, I had never before thought of him as being my possible kinsman."

"You might find a less worthy one," was Mr. Henderson's remark, as the subject of the conversation entered the office door.

Stuart glanced at the boy with fresh interest, and was glad to note that every line of his face and figure seemed to proclaim gentle blood and noble lineage.

"How little he suspects the truth," the young lawyer mused, as he watched him busy himself about his homely work in the office. "If he is as faithful in the discharge of the duties that will devolve upon him when he is established in his inheritance as he is in the duties here, he will be one in a thousand, and a cousin in whom to feel a pardonable pride."

It will thus be seen that Stuart Holcombe had no doubt in his own mind as to the office boy's identity with the missing heir of the estate in which, as a lawyer, he had been so long interested.

Although all the facts bearing on the case

which could be gleaned from the relatives of the Fielding family had long since been obtained, Stuart still continued his visits to the ranche.

Mrs. Fielding welcomed him with frank pleasure, and her husband, although less demonstrative, shared her feeling. Florence alone was coy and capricious, sometimes gay and again reserved, never greeting him in the same mood on any successive visits.

Her variable manner baffled him almost as much as the lack of success in proving Clay's identity baffled him in settling up the Claymore estate.

"If constancy and devotion can win her, she shall be my wife, if I have to wait for her as long as Jacob had to wait for Rachel," he mused, after an evening spent at the ranche when Floy had been more sparkling, yet less approachable, than usual.

Thus the reader will notice that his old sou-briquet of "the bachelor" had become so distasteful to him that he was fully determined to merit it no longer than he could avoid.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.”

LEANING against the casement of a window in the Walton mansion stood Ross Rivers. He looked aimlessly out at the throng of handsomely-dressed people who were passing.

It was Easter Sabbath. The sunshine flashed as brightly as though its one object was to typify that more wonderful brightness which spanned the spiritual universe nineteen hundred years ago, when the glorious Sun of Righteousness burst the bonds of death and the tomb, and thereby proved the truth of his own words spoken to Martha of Bethany, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

“I wonder why all those people are going to church,” Ross mused; and then, noting the loveliness of many of the costumes, his lip curled as he added, “Many are going, no doubt, to show off their new hats and gowns. I don’t know anything, myself, about religion, but I think the Bible preacher was right when he wrote, ‘Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.’ ”

Being in this mood it was no wonder that when Marcia came into the room a moment later he examined her toilet with interested and critical eyes.

Her gown was a marvel of grace and beauty, and her jaunty hat held such a profusion of roses and violets that Ross involuntarily sniffed the air as if to inhale their supposed fragrance.

"Ross, do please go to church with me to-day, won't you?" she said, in a pleading voice, not noticing the expression on his face.

"Why should I go?" he inquired.

"Oh! I would like to have you walk with me. Cousin Ned has some tiresome engagement to go down to one of the missions with Dr. Traver; and I hate to have to walk alone."

Then, perceiving the cynical curve of his lip, she added, "The chapel is to be decorated so beautifully that I know you will enjoy seeing it. You have never been to church with me, Ross, since we came to Portland."

"Are these the only reasons for my going?" he asked.

"Well, no. The girls will all have on their new Easter costumes, and you are such a lover of beauty, and so fastidious in your taste, I know it will give you pleasure to see them. There are some beautiful girls who attend our

church, and they dress with exquisite taste," was Marcia's reply. She was wholly oblivious of the deepening scorn on her brother's countenance.

"With such weighty reasons for my presence in church, surely I must not disappoint you," he said, and then added, surveying her from head to foot: "What a stunning turnout! Do you suppose any one in your vicinity will be able to listen to the sermon?"

"Why do you ask?" she inquired, while a pleased flush mantled her cheeks.

"Oh! my mind was just reverting to the old game of 'weighing consequences,'" he replied, with a laugh, as he stepped into the hall for his hat and gloves.

This fair sister of his had been a member of the church for almost two years. Ross had thought, when she joined, that she bade fair to grow into a genuine saint. And in spite of his habit of speaking lightly of sacred things, he had wished at the time that he could feel the same enthusiasm about holy things that she seemed to feel.

Looking at her now, with the frivolous air of the world so conspicuously marking her, his lip curled into a cynical smile as he said in his heart, "Religion seems to be a back number

these days. I wonder if it is not all a sham and an empty show, as I have half believed for years."

"You won't care to listen to the sermon," Marcia said, as they neared the elegant chapel where she worshipped. "Dr. Garland is a very plain, uninteresting speaker. I don't see why they keep him. But he is a good man, and I suppose they hate to hurt his feelings by letting him know that he is not popular with the young people. Some of the older members consider him a second St. Paul; but I find him so tiresome I can hardly sit still."

After they were seated in their pew, and Marcia had quieted down from the flutter of being able to march up the aisle with such a distinguished-looking fellow as was Ross by her side, she whispered, under cover of the brilliant voluntary, "Aren't the decorations lovely? And did you ever before see such a mass of beautiful dresses outside of an opera house?"

Ross made no response. His eyes were resting upon the minister, who now arose, hymn-book in hand, to announce the opening hymn.

The choir had ended their joyous chant in which Ross had caught the words, repeated over and over, "He is risen, he is risen from the dead.

Depart vain world ; his glory fills my soul. Depart, depart vain world."

Ross almost laughed as he noticed the flowers and feathers and costly array of the singers. He thought within himself that "the vain world," so far as he could see, held more of their thoughts and hearts than did the glorious One of whom they chanted.

There was something about Dr. Garland's face and bearing that wonderfully impressed him: a strength and power utterly at variance with Marcia's description. He listened expectantly to catch the first sound of his voice. Yes, it deepened the impression his face had already made, and held just the rich, vibrant tone he had expected.

The hymn took on new meaning when read by such a man in such a tone, and Ross wondered why he had never before considered it pleasing. It was an old hymn, and he had heard it in his younger days scores of times, yet until this morning it had seemed a meaningless jingle of words to him.

Mrs. Rivers was a sincere follower of Christ; but she was in feeble health, and rarely worshipped in the public sanctuary. Her influence had kept Ross in Sabbath-school and in attendance on church services until her waning health,

some six years previous to her introduction into this story, had debarred her from enjoying these privileges herself. As soon as Ross was deprived of her companionship he withdrew from Sunday-school, and resolutely declined to longer attend the ministry of the Word.

His uncle, Mr. John Walton, although a member of the church, gave little proof in his daily walk that he possessed the vital life which marks the true Christian. Thus it was that to-day, for the first time in almost six years, Ross found himself inside the house of God.

Perhaps the very novelty of his position made him eager to take in all there was to be heard. At any rate, he found himself much annoyed by his sister's restlessness, and by her mute endeavors to direct his attention to certain persons whom she evidently desired him to notice.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

As Dr. Garland repeated these words, giving them as the truth about which his remarks were to cluster, Ross felt a strange thrill pass through his heart.

Not one word of the sermon did he miss. The minister's style was simple. There was no art of the trained elocutionist about him; but a subtle power, a peculiar "something," which Ross had never before felt, marked his discourse.

Even Marcia lost her inattentive manner after a time, and seemed to listen. Possibly the rapt attention with which Ross followed every word the preacher uttered filled her with curiosity, and moved her with a desire to know the secret of his interest in the sermon.

Toward the close of the discourse, after he had pictured in strong, tender words, the suffering and death of the meek and lowly Prince of Peace; and then painted his glorious resurrection and ascension, and described the benefits flowing to the believer because of this marvellous triumph over death and hell, the minister said, "Is the visible church to-day wholly loyal to the risen Christ? Is his blessed resurrection life so filling her that she is confusing and scattering the allied forces of darkness in her onward march to victory? Listen. Our country is said to stand at the front of Christian nations. She expends annually seven hundred and fifty million dollars for tobacco. How much to send the glorious gospel of our Lord to those nations sitting under the shadow of eternal death? Less than six million. One hundred dollars for tobacco for every dollar for foreign missions.

"Is this startling? Pause and think. How many within the sound of my voice contribute ten dollars for foreign missions and spend fifty

for tobacco? Does this conjunction of facts surprise you? Possibly you have never before looked at this subject from my standpoint.

“There are more startling figures still before us than those just given. Mark them. Christian America spends fourteen hundred millions yearly for intoxicating liquors. How much for the cause of home missions? A larger amount than for foreign missions, and yet not one dollar for every hundred dollars spent for liquor. And the total amount for both home and foreign is so small that it is a disgrace to the church, and ought to make every Christian blush.

“Let each one before me who bears the name of the risen Christ carefully note the amount he or she spends for useless trifles, needless luxuries, injurious stimulants. Against this amount place every dollar given to advance the cause of the One who not only said, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life,’ but who also said, ‘Behold, I come quickly,’ and of whom it is written, ‘His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ ”

Then followed such burning words that Ross half expected to hear a divine voice saying, “I never knew you. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”

Marcia's voice jarred upon him, as, when passing out of the church, she said, in a whisper, "Notice that girl just going down the steps. She is beautiful and popular, yet she goes to China in June as a missionary. She surely must be crazy."

"I am not surprised at her going if Dr. Garland preaches usually as he did to-day," Ross quickly responded. "I almost feel as though I myself wanted to go to China, or Africa, or somewhere, to prove that I am not numbered among the chaff and the workers of iniquity."

Marcia glanced into his face and was surprised to note upon it traces of deep agitation.

"And did you enjoy the sermon?" she asked. "I had to listen, although I tried not to; but it made me shiver. I wish they would get another minister. I don't like Dr. Garland."

Ross gazed intently into her face. As he listened to her words he found himself wondering if the frivolous life she was leading was not choking from her heart all that was best and noblest in her nature.

After dinner Mr. Walton took a cigar and carelessly pushed the box containing them toward Ross. The young man selected one, and having lighted it, puffed away silently for a few moments. They were alone together. All at

once he arose and flung the weed into the grate.

"What is the matter?" his uncle asked, in surprise.

"Uncle John, I want to ask you something. You won't think I am impertinent, will you?" was his nephew's counter question.

"Go ahead," the elder man responded, curiosity expressed in both face and voice.

"How much do you contribute yearly to foreign missions?"

Mr. Walton elevated his eye-brows as he said, "Exactly ten dollars. This is more than I felt I ought to give, for I am not a believer in foreign missions; but Dr. Garland pressed me so closely that I had to make it that."

"And how much to home missions?" Ross asked.

"Fifteen. I like to see where my money goes, so I give more to the home field than to the other," was the response.

"And now, will you pardon me, uncle, if I ask you what your tobacco bill is a year?"

"What are you driving at, Ross?" Mr. Walton replied, much astonished by this series of questions.

"I will tell you later. Please let me know, if you can, what you spend for tobacco. Yes, and

for wine, for, you know, you keep a moderate supply of the best wines on hand for extra occasions. I know I open a bottle once in a while just for fun when I don't know what else to do."

His uncle pondered a while and then said, "I have never kept an accurate account of my expenditures along this line. One hundred dollars will cover it, I judge. Possibly one hundred and fifty, for I am obliged to treat so many friends to cigars. I never offer wine. That is against my principles."

"And now, one more question. What do you give toward Dr. Garland's salary?"

"Forty dollars," was the prompt reply. "And now, will you please tell me why you have asked these strange questions?"

"Something in Dr. Garland's sermon this morning prompted them;" and Ross proceeded to give an outline of the discourse. He ended with, "I wish you had heard it, uncle. Why weren't you there?"

"Dr. Garland tires me. I like more style and brilliancy than he possesses. He is not up to the times; is not suited to a fashionable congregation like the one that fills Blakemore chapel."

"Well," Ross responded, slowly, "what you say may be true; but that man has some strange power about him that I believe is from God.

His sermon this morning went clear through me. And I can't get away from it, either."

There was a silence of some minutes. Then he added, in a deliberate tone, "I have smoked my last cigar. I declare to you, uncle, that in the light of Dr. Garland's words to-day I seemed to see myself among those brutal men around the cross hounding Christ on to his death. It was horrible. The money I have hitherto spent for cigars shall go to the church. I cannot stand this feeling that I have had a hand in crucifying the Lord my mother loves and worships."

Mr. Walton was silent for some moments. His nephew's last words seemed to have touched him. Presently he, too, threw his cigar into the fire, and said, "I tried years ago to break away from tobacco. I knew it was injuring my health, and that it gave distress to your aunt for me to use it; but I was powerless. I gave it up for two weeks, but I suffered torture. It has too firm a grip on me now for me to break away. Besides, a man is free to use what he chooses, and whatever harm could be done to my health is now an accomplished fact. I can't see that it hurts me these days." *

* These words were actually once spoken by a minister of the gospel to the writer.

"But how about the money expended which could go toward carrying on church work?" Ross asked.

"Oh! I don't see but that I do my part. I give more than Gray or Bennet. Yes, and more than Dobbs, who is reported to be worth half a million."

Ross made no reply. Many things were at work in his mind of which he did not care to speak to his uncle.

He found Ned Hunter, and made such a confession of his perturbed state of mind as filled that young man with keen pleasure.

Ned gave him such advice as he felt he needed, and then sought his own room, there to pour out his soul in prayer for the young man, who, up to this date, had seemed so wholly given up to the world and its pleasures that Ned had entertained small hope of ever seeing him changed.

"What a rebuke to my lack of faith his conviction under Dr. Garland's sermon is," he murmured, as, two hours later, he wended his way to the Y. M. C. A. rooms. Ross refused to accompany him, alleging that he was in such a state that he had to settle matters alone with God.

He did this so effectually that before the next

Sabbath dawned a new life was thrilling through his soul.

One person, at least, was led to Christ through the fearlessly-uttered words of a consecrated minister of the gospel on that memorable Easter morning, for Ross Rivers knew no peace until he had yielded his heart and life wholly to God.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIFE CENTRES CHANGED.

WHILE Marcia Rivers felt no stirring of conscience under what had stricken her brother to the soul, his altered life impressed her strongly.

"How much do you spend on your dress?" Ross asked her, after he had attended his first communion service in the chapel.

"Mamma gives me three hundred and fifty dollars a year," she replied. "Why do you ask?"

"And how much do you give to the church?" he continued.

"I? Why, girls are not expected to give anything. Mamma and Uncle John give enough for us all," was her astonished answer.

"Do they?" her brother said, in a significant tone. "Some day, Marcia, when you and I stand in the presence of our glorious Lord, many things which we now accept as truth will fall away from us, and leave us, I fear, shivering beneath his all-searching eye. Let us try to get just where he wants us before it is too late."

Thus it will be seen that the change in Ross Rivers went far deeper than is seen in many cases where young men profess a change of heart and unite themselves with God's people. His whole life was revolutionized; so radically so that Ned Hunter remarked to Dr. Traver: "Ross is in such dead earnest, and he seems to be making such rapid strides in the spiritual life, that I am beginning to see what the Word means when it says, 'The last shall be first, and the first last.' I am deciding that I must get a fresh touch of power from above, or I may find myself among the 'last' when settling day comes."

"A fresh touch is what we all need," the doctor responded, warmly. "I feel the need of it in order to push the saloon demon to the wall in several places where I find him evading the law. And we need more power in our Y. M. C. A. work, too."

Thus it transpired that a little band of the most earnest Christians of the church, with Dr. Garland as their leader, organized themselves into what they called "The Waiting Band."

They met once each week for the avowed purpose of waiting on God for cleansing, and for the outpouring of his Spirit in full anointing for service. These meetings became the

centre from which sprung such a revival as the city had never before witnessed.

Dr. Garland found in Ross Rivers, Sidney Gordon and Ned Hunter such loyal friends and supporters along the line of the deeper truths into which he was striving to lead his people that his half-formed purpose of resigning his pastorate of Blakemore chapel and seeking another field of labor was abandoned.

The wave of revival, at first small, swept onward with such mighty power that every Protestant church in the city was brought under its influence.

Dr. Traver and Helen belonged to a church nearer their home than the chapel, but they were members of "The Waiting Band" and rarely missed a meeting. The charm of these services was their utter simplicity, and as all who attended were Christians who were truly "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," it is not strange that the Holy Spirit was ere long manifested in their midst in remarkable blessedness and power.

Even Marcia Rivers, who at first attended through curiosity, after a time became deeply interested, and began to evince a spiritual life never before manifested.

About this period she began to grow notice-

ably fond of Helen Traver, and, as her interest in religious subjects deepened, the friendship ripened into an intimacy that did much toward developing and strengthening the young girl's character.

Her interest in the flower mission revived, and Ned no longer had cause to smile over her short-lived "fads."

He watched the change being wrought in her with loving interest, and thanked God afresh for the formation of "The Waiting Band." Nothing but blessing had resulted from the movement, and the membership of Blakemore chapel, being permeated and influenced by the men and women who were being led from a walk of formalism into a fervid religious life "apart with Christ," was visibly trying to reach a higher standard than had ever before been deemed possible.

One morning, while alone in his study, Dr. Garland was both pleased and surprised to receive a call from Marcia Rivers. Never before had she voluntarily sought his presence.

She came at once to the object of her visit by saying, "I want to become a contributor toward the founding of the cot in the Douglas hospital. It is a lovely plan, and I have been interested in seeing it accomplished ever since you spoke of

it two months ago; but I never thought I could give much help toward founding it until a day or two ago."

She paused, and her cheeks grew rosy under her pastor's earnest glance, and under her doubt as to how much of her own heart-history she should confide in him.

"Go on," he said, gently. "I am very glad for your interest. A poor crippled boy is waiting to occupy the cot whenever it shall be furnished."

Marcia's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I wonder if there ever before was such a thoughtless and selfish girl as I who belonged to the church? Here I have been wasting my money on silly amusements and costly dresses ever since I joined, never thinking that it grieved God until Ross spoke of it. And even after he talked with me about it, it has taken me so long to be willing to sacrifice my own pleasures that I am afraid God will not care for my offering."

The tears were now dropping down her cheeks.

"Our Father is always glad when a child of his is longing to know and do his will, no matter how slow that child may have been in reaching this point," was the minister's smiling answer.

"Then you do think my offering will please

him, even though it comes so late?" was the girl's quick query.

"I am sure of it. Even a cup of cold water given through love for him is promised a blessing."

Marcia reached an envelope toward him as he finished speaking, saying, "Here is a hundred dollars for the cot. I don't want any one to know who gave it. God will know, and that is enough. And he also knows how sorry and ashamed I am that I have been robbing him so long."

Dr. Garland's eyes were lighted with a sudden joy as he took the offering. He simply said, "This will enable us to place poor Jimmie Conally in the hospital to-day. Mr. Gordon called on me yesterday and gave me a check for the same amount. Surely God is answering our prayers and moving upon the hearts of his people."

"How good he is," Marcia murmured. "After all my dallying and waiting he yet permits my gift to be the means of putting the boy at once where he can receive the help he so needs! I am sure I shall never again be so thoughtless and selfish."

As she rose to go her pastor said, "Let us kneel here together and ask our Father's bless-

ing on Jimmie, and that it may also rest on those who, by their offerings, are enabling us to place him in the hospital."

Marcia never forgot that prayer. It seemed to her, as she listened, that Dr. Garland stood face to face with God.

When at last they arose and she extended her hand to say good-bye her pastor remarked, "As you are well acquainted with Mr. Gordon, perhaps you will be interested to know that he has offered himself as a medical missionary for the African field." Then, seeing her surprise, he added, "Perhaps you will recall the fact that I made a plea for our mission at Luebo not many Sabbaths ago. Two young men, one a physician, are sorely needed for the station. Mr. Gordon, it seems, is a physician, although he has practiced but little."

"Yes, I remember your plea perfectly; and I wondered then who would be willing to go, for the climate in Africa is so very trying," was Marcia's response.

"Well, Sidney Gordon is the first one who has offered. I am sure God will give us the other. Dr. Gordon says that his whole life up to this point has been wasted. He wants to give the remainder of it wholly to God."

Marcia went home feeling that she was begin-

ning to understand, in a small measure, at least, what it meant to be consecrated to God.

She learned more about it when, the following week, Ross said to her, "I have just had a long talk with mother. I had decided some days since to go with Gordon as a lay worker to Africa if she were willing."

Marcia gazed into his face with startled eyes.

"What did mother say?" she inquired.

"She said she was *glad* to give her only son for the rescue of dying souls in Africa," Ross answered. "I never knew until to-day how my godless life has grieved her; and I now understand why that Easter sermon of Dr. Garland's so broke me to pieces. My mother's prayers have been besieging the throne for years, and so God just sent down an answer that morning."

Marcia was silent. She was wondering if her own intensified spiritual life might not also be due to the prayers of this same invalid mother. Ross continued, "Dr Traver's life was the first thing that really turned my mind to holy things. In watching him I was forced to decide that there was a power in religion which I had never before believed. I suppose this, in a measure, prepared me for Dr. Garland's sermon."

Still Marcia was silent. Her brother's words pierced her with fresh grief because of the

worldly life she was now deeply conscious she had been leading until recently.

"When will you leave?" she at length asked, with moist eyes.

"I do not yet know. As soon as I can be examined and get ready. Gordon has already passed his examination."

His tone was blithe, and the lustre in his eyes showed his joy in the prospect that stretched before him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RESTORED RIGHTS.

STUART HOLCOMBE and Florence Field-
ing were alone in Mrs. Fielding's handsome parlors. The hour was growing late, considering the distance the young lawyer had to ride in order to reach his home.

The topic of their conversation may be inferred from something Floy is saying, as we pause a moment to listen.

"I never intend to become a wife. I should despise a man within a month who tried to make me obey him."

In spite of the brave words there was something in her tone and bearing which half cancelled them.

Stuart looked down upon her flushed cheeks with a smile in his eyes, although his answer was serious enough.

"And such a man would merit your scorn. Don't you know, in an ideal marriage, there is no question of obedience? A true woman desires to please her husband because she loves

him, with no thought of slavish obedience; and a man worthy of the name so guards and cherishes the woman who has intrusted her happiness to his keeping that his one thought will be how best to promote that happiness. Believe me, Florence, should you become my wife, the word 'obey' would prove a meaningless term between us."

He had never before called her by her name. Her heart thrilled under the intonation of his voice as he spoke it. Yet she glanced into his face a little defiantly as she answered, "Men have spoken thus before; and they have meant what they said as truly as do you. Yet their wives have not been happy."

"That is true; but do you believe it will be true of us?" He looked intently into her eyes as he asked this question. The very fact of his asking it so clearly presupposed that she was to be his wife that, in spite of her annoyance, Florence smiled; but the smile was a fleeting one, immediately followed by a frown.

Stuart did not seem to see the frown. He extended his hand, saying, "Good-night. May your dreams be sweet, and may Love weave his sacred spell around your heart while you slumber."

He did not retain her hand a moment longer

than was courteous, but his clasp held a magnetic power she had never before experienced.

When he reached the door he turned and again said "Good-night."

His eyes and voice both held a distinct caress. Florence frowned, but her voice was very soft as she also repeated the words "Good-night."

In spite of the love that held his heart in thrall, Stuart, as he entered the office the following morning, was as alert toward business affairs as though the little god had not kept him awake half the previous night, painting the features of Florence Fielding before his mental vision until his enraptured soul exclaimed,

"There is none like her, none,
Nor will be when our summers have deceased."

Mr. Henderson had not yet made his appearance, and the young lawyer was just beginning to write on a legal document which he had left unfinished the previous afternoon, when a knock at the office door attracted his attention.

Clay answered the unusual summons, and a small boy stood revealed on the threshold holding a letter in his hands.

"This yere's fur a lawyer feller wat's called Holcombe," he announced, holding the missive tightly clutched and staring inquiringly around the large room.

"All right. I am your man," Stuart said, with an amused smile.

The boy spurned Clay's outstretched hand, and advanced toward the young man, saying, "The gent wat had it writ sed ez how I wasn't ter let no feller tech it but Mr. Holcombe. Here 'tis."

As Stuart reached for the letter the boy added, "An' he 'lowed ye'd gimme er dime fur fetchin' it. I run mos' all the way."

Noting the boy's squalid appearance, the young lawyer slipped a quarter into his grimy hand, saying, "Go and buy yourself some breakfast. You look half starved."

Then he opened the missive and read:

"MR. S. HOLCOMBE: Come at once to the city hospital. A man who gives his name as Roland Jennings is dying. He has something of importance to communicate. Do not delay. He cannot last much longer.

"MARTHA WHITTICAR, *Nurse in Charge.*"

Stuart sprang to his feet and seized his hat, only pausing to say to Clay, "Tell Mr. Henderson that important business has called me out. Do not know when I shall be back. I will—" but at this moment the elder lawyer himself ascended the steps.

Stuart hastened to him and placed the open letter in his hand.

Mr. Henderson read it at a glance. Then he said, "I will accompany you. Anything that man has to say must have more than one witness."

He gave a few words of direction to Clay, and then the two men walked rapidly down the street. The boy who brought the note had disappeared.

At the first crossing they hailed a street-car, and in less than half an hour after Stuart received the letter they ascended the steps of the hospital.

A few moments delay occurred before they could find the nurse whose signature was on the missive.

At last she made her appearance, and proved to be a tall, matronly woman, who greeted them by saying, "Follow me. He is sinking fast."

The next moment the two men were standing by a cot and gazing down upon the pallid features of a man whose drawn face denoted intense suffering. His eyes brightened as he saw Stuart Holcombe.

"It is Nat Jones," the young man exclaimed, as he scanned the dying man's face.

"Yes, but I was once known as Roland Jennings," he returned. Then he added, turning his eyes on the nurse, "Now give me something to ease the pain. I must talk, and I haven't got long."

The woman dropped some medicine into a spoon and held it to his lips. After he had swallowed it he lay a moment in silence. Then he said, looking toward Mr. Henderson, "Write down what I tell you; and don't miss a word. Clam Jones is not my son. His father was Reginald Rutledge. I hated the father, and I hated the boy. I courted his mother, Lucy Claymore, before she married Rutledge. When she turned from me to him I swore I'd be revenged. When Rutledge died I waited a while; then I pretended to be fond of the child, and in that way I won the mother."

He paused a moment, and the nurse moistened his lips with a sponge. Then he continued, "I made her life a perfect hell. She died in Kansas City. She did not mean to trust the boy with me; but she dropped off suddenly, before she had fixed up the papers. All the money I could get hold of I pocketed. I changed my name to Nathaniel Jones. As I sunk lower and lower, I was called old Nat Jones. There's a box of papers belonging to Clam hid under the

hearth in the shanty out on A—— street. I always meant to burn them, but never did.”

Again he paused. His breath was labored. The nurse administered more of the drops. He seemed to rally, and added, “I guess God kept an eye on the boy. Many a time I vowed I’d cut his throat, for he was the exact image of Redge Rutledge. But I never did. I meant to have crippled him for life that morning you came and stopped me.” The dying man turned his eyes to Stuart as he spoke.

“I could have killed you then for interfering; but I’m glad now you came. God has never let up on me since that hour. I have never left Tacoma; but I dodged the detectives by wearing half a dozen different disguises. Once I had a long chat with one of them. He thought I was a well-digger from the country.”

A gleam of humor for a moment passed over his face. This was followed by a groan of pain. He muttered, “I’ve cursed God all my life. Now he’s got me down, and I daren’t curse him any more. I was drunk—fell on the track—and the train ran over me. I’m glad I’ve lived long enough to set Clam right. His name is Claymore. I’ll feel easier about facing Lucy, now I’ve told you all you need to know. I used up all his money I could lay my hands on; but the

land is left. I couldn't touch that; and I'm glad I couldn't, now."

He sank into a stupor for a few moments. Then, with a shriek, he turned on his side, tried to escape something he felt was clutching him, gasped, and was dead.

"The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small," Stuart Holcombe said, in a low voice, as he turned away from the awful sight.

Mr. Henderson made no response until they had reached the street. Then he said, "After all, it is God, and not our skill, that has given the Claymore estate into the hands of its rightful owner."

The box of papers was found exactly where the dying man had said it was concealed. It contained letters, and what other evidence was needed to establish Clay's claim to the estate that had once belonged to his mother.

Happy as was the boy over the clearing up of the mystery which shrouded his birth and parentage, and proud as he was in the splendid inheritance which was now his, his keenest pleasure seemed to come from finding that Stuart Holcombe was his kinsman.

His joy over this fact was pathetic, and it at once induced the young lawyer to take the boy

into his own home, where Sarah Grant's loving and sympathetic nature soon surrounded his lonely heart with something of the affection for which he had so long pined.

His earthly prospects were now as bright as they had once been clouded, and as his religious life had continually deepened and developed since the morning when he first consciously embraced Christ as his Saviour and King, his friends feel that there is no reason why his life should not become a noble and prosperous one.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GLANCES HERE AND THERE.

SOME months after Clay Rutledge had entered into possession of his inheritance, Stuart Holcombe received a letter from Helen which contained an item of news that is of sufficient importance to be inserted in this chapter.

She wrote of various things which she thought would be of interest to her brother, and then, after sending messages of affection to both Clay and Sarah, she added, "I have almost forgotten to tell you something which has just become known to me, and which has given me great pleasure. This is the engagement of Ned Hunter to his cousin, Marcia Rivers. While they are related, the tie is so far removed that it offers no obstacle to their marriage. Marcia is a dear girl, and a lovely character. Ned is devoted to her, and she is as happy in his love as any true woman should be in the affection of the man whose wife she expects to become.

"This engagement, dear Stuart, has again made me sad, as I recall that you still seem reso-

lutely determined to shut yourself away from the joys that flow from a happy marriage. My one consolation is, that Cousin Sarah is with you, and as I am sure she is too self-contained and independent ever to think of marriage for herself, she will doubtless remain with you as long as she lives.

“She is so cheery and sunny that I know your home is always bright, yet I should be happier to know that some noble girl was to become your wife, and share the love which I, better than any one else on earth, know to be so strong, tender and true.”

This letter Stuart handed Sarah Grant to read. As her eyes scanned the last few paragraphs, her face flushed. She glanced up into her cousin's face, and as the humorous light in his eyes flashed upon her, she broke into a low laugh of mingled amusement and embarrassment.

“Shall I tell her what a wise seer she is in prognosticating your future, by relating to her the proofs of her wisdom as I have learned them from Rodney within the last two days?” he inquired, with another mischievous glance into her eyes.

“You may tell her what you choose about me if you will supplement it with a similar his-

tory of yourself," she replied, rising and moving toward the door. Her face looked almost girlish in its modest confusion.

Stuart broke into a happy laugh as he listened to the words.

"A good retort," he said, then added, "You may be sure I shall give her a detailed account of my happiness as well as of yours."

That same evening he wrote a long answer to his sister's letter. Some of its contents might be learned from Helen's ejaculations of surprise and pleasure as she eagerly read the closely-filled pages; but we will content ourselves by reporting some words with which she greeted Dr. Traver's entrance into the room where she sat some minutes after she had finished her letter.

"Do you know, dear, that we have an invitation to attend two weddings in Tacoma the first day of June? Or rather," she corrected, "it is a double wedding. You will never, never guess who the parties are."

"Well, if you are sure I can't guess, don't keep me in suspense," Dr. Traver responded, playfully pinching her cheek.

"It is Stuart and Cousin Sarah Grant," Helen announced, in a tone of triumph.

Dr. Traver was even more surprised than she had anticipated.

"Not really?" he questioned, with a look of dismay coming into his face. "Your cousin is a fine woman; but—but— isn't she a little old for Stuart?"

Helen's ringing laugh perplexed him until she explained, "No, no. Stuart is going to marry Florence Fielding, my dearest friend, you know, and the very girl I picked out for him long ago; and Cousin Sarah marries Rodney Jackson. Mr. Jackson has joined the church. Stuart says he is wonderfully changed. Isn't it all delightful?"

Dr. Traver admitted that it was, and then added some words that caused Helen's cheeks to flush with pleasure as she whispered, "Yes, I hope they will be just as happy; but I don't think they can be."

"No, for neither Stuart nor Jackson will have a Helen," he responded, at which she laughed and nestled her head against his shoulder.

"That is the saintliest face I have ever seen; yet how very youthful. I wonder who she is. Some terrible sorrow has come to her. One can tell that. Yet the peace of heaven is mirrored on her countenance. Do you know her?"

The speaker was a stranger in Tacoma. He

was standing on the steps of a church. His dress proclaimed him to be a clergyman. The friend addressed, who was a resident of the city, replied, "Yes; her name is Miller. Her story is a sad one. Her husband shot himself in a gambling den after he had gambled away everything he possessed. Every one thought the blow would kill his wife. His mother did die within six months; but Mrs. Miller, his wife, rallied wonderfully after a while. She is now a sort of city missionary—a deaconess—or something of that sort, I believe. I hear that her work among the out-casts of society is wonderfully successful."

The speakers passed on down the steps of the church, and were soon lost among the hundreds of worshippers who came pouring out from the sacred edifice.

Let us follow Edith Miller, and see if the clergyman's description of the peace he saw stamped on her face be true.

Her home is with an earnest Christian family of moderate means. Her stipend, paid her by one of the largest churches in the city, to teach and work in a mission opened for women and girls, enables her to provide all that is needful for herself and Robbie. The child was now almost three years of age.

She is sitting by a table engaged in earnest conversation with a woman whose poorly-clad figure denotes the fact that she belongs to the lower class of society. This woman, who is young and attractive, has come to talk with Edith about spiritual matters, and as she listens to the strong words the other speaks, an expression of surprise marks her countenance.

"How did you learn to know the Master so well?" she asks, gazing wistfully into Edith's shining face.

"May I tell you?" the latter answers, softly. "It may help you to hear my story. I have never told it to any one before, but I feel that he—the Master—wants me to tell it to you as a warning and incentive for you to choose him as your all in all. You are facing a crisis, Mary, as I once faced one. Your lover is drawing you away from God, into the world and into sin. Jesus is calling you to walk apart with him. Be careful how you disregard his tender voice."

She paused a moment and leaned her face on her clasped hands. Then she gently told the outlines of her marriage, as is already known to the reader. In as few words as possible she narrated the horror that closed her married life.

"You ask me, Mary, how I have learned to know the Master so well. In the awful agony

of those first weeks after the blow fell it seemed to me that God had cast me off; but little by little his love softened and melted my rebellious heart until I knew I wanted HIM more, a thousand times more, than I wanted life. Oh! my heart grew so hungry for his love; so hungry to have his presence in my soul as I once had it that I was willing to die right then if only he would manifest himself to me." The woman's sympathetic face glowed as she listened to these words.

"That's how I feels some days," she said, in a low voice.

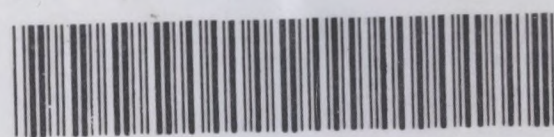
"Day by day the hunger increased," Edith continued, "until it seemed I could not live unless he would come to me; and one night he came. Oh! I can't tell you about it. It seemed like heaven to me. All my sorrow and loneliness slipped away from me. I had Jesus, and Jesus had me, and that was enough; and I have never been alone since, Mary. It is joy to live and work for him, and he gives me precious souls often and often. His sweet Presence never leaves me; and he gives me kind friends, and keeps my boy well and strong, and so fills me with his goodness that my cup runs over."

As one gazes into her face the clergyman's words are recalled. Yes, the peace of God is,

in truth, stamped upon it. More than this; a softened glory shines there that tells that heaven has already begun within her heart; for where Jesus is, is heaven, and surely the blessed One is an abiding Presence in the sanctuary of Edith Miller's soul.

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